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Experiencing the Novel:
The Tender Conscience in Early Modern England

by

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Abstract

Experiencing the Novel: The Tender Conscience in Early Modern England

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Berkeley

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My dissertation, *Experiencing the Novel: The Tender Conscience in Early Modern England*, maps a seismic shift in perceptions of sensitivity that reshaped the political realm and gave to literary history a new aesthetic form. Since Ian Watt's seminal work, scholars have distinguished the eighteenth-century novel from earlier prose fiction by the verisimilitude it achieves through circumstantial detail. This approach has yielded a remarkable critical silence on the character at the novel's center: a hyperconscious observer who instantly and perpetually transforms perception into ordered, written narrative. Against the tacit scholarly consensus that associates this subject with the rise of individualism, my project identifies in this figure a collectively-held ideal that emerged in England's revolutionary period. It was then that citizens made public declarations of tenderness, appealing to a Pauline theory of community-formation and its vision of a fluidly-formed collective that reshapes itself to meet the needs of the most vulnerable within it. A powerful community-binding complex of cognition, feeling, and ethics, the tender conscience persists well into the eighteenth century: it is the affective epistemology that drives Enlightenment thought from Lockean empiricism to Smithean sentimentalism.

To be alive to the momentous import of little things: this desire, I contend, lies at the heart of the political revolution which precipitates a literary one. There was nothing inevitable about the seventeenth-century invention of a tender conscience. The term never appears in Scripture, and its closest relative in English Bibles, the "weak conscience," is never held up as an ideal to be emulated. As dissatisfaction with episcopal rule mounted in the 1640s, however, citizens insisted on a tender conscience as reflexively averse to sin as the body's tender parts are to pain. For those who openly identified as "tender consciences," Archbishop Laud's minor revisions to liturgical practice induced excruciating pain. Sensitivity had been elevated into a privileged spiritual disposition; it now demanded political consideration. Through discovering their own tenderness, the subjects of Charles I acquired political voices, and they invoked the moral language of the tender conscience to justify resistance. For some, this heightened sensitivity transformed the discomfort of monarchical imposition into life-threatening pain for which regicide would be the only remedy. Following the Restoration, as self-proclaimed tender consciences faced political exclusion, they improvised a set of cultural practices for negotiating their vulnerable status. The empiricist aesthetic they developed grapples with the impossibility of political belonging while preserving, in memory and practice, the exquisite phenomenology that imagines things otherwise.

The introduction follows this regulative ideal from its striking absence in Elizabethan-era works of prose fiction to its emergence among a new set of writers who did not intend to enter mainstream literary culture at all. William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1561) literally demonizes sensitivity as it makes satiric fodder out of the narrator's heightened perceptions. The protagonist attains his keen senses through grotesquely occult means, to the disruption of narrative and social order. Hypersensitivity comes to be redefined as virtue among Puritan diarists and autobiographers who embraced writing as the very practice of tender conscience. During the revolutionary era that saw the publication of anthologies such as Vavasor Powell's *Spiritual Experiences* (1651), collective thresholds of affective sensitivity became a pressing subject of widespread, indeed national, concern.

For John Milton, the subject of my first chapter, the work of defining the tender conscience is so closely tied to arguments for the legitimacy of revolutionary activity that his oeuvre can be read as a protracted struggle to establish its boundaries. Against those who feared its anarchic potential, Milton championed the strength that tender consciences might lend to the English polity. In place of the Arthurian epic of English heroism he once envisioned, Milton imagines an epic in which all human history turns on a dietary restriction and a domestic dispute. The innocence of Eden had been conceived from antiquity onwards as a state of conscientious tranquility; Milton alone recounts Eve's scrupulous vulnerability—the guilty tears she sheds over a mere dream. In Milton's retelling, paradisaical perfection and strength are manifested in hypersensitivity to the slightest hint of sin. The “novelization” of epic that readers of *Paradise Lost* have long noted thus hinges not only on the scaling down of action, but more importantly, on the phenomenology of the tender conscience, whose perpetually sensitive attunement to world-historical minutiae shapes even Milton's imagistic strategies.

My second chapter reads Daniel Defoe's novels alongside the thought of John Locke. The tender conscience posited the public privilege of sensitivity; Locke's political theory preserves this role, and his philosophical writings further assert its epistemological reach. More wax than stone, Locke's *tabula rasa* proves pliable, as thought itself depends on the mind's vulnerability to impressions. Locke envisions a political subject constituted by receptivity, both epistemological and conscientious, and believes with many contemporaries that conscience-bearing subjects must undergo the same “tenderizing” processes that constantly reshape Defoe's characters. The inviolable rights of the Lockean subject are those of an endlessly impressionable conscience that requires the restrained use of power; Locke defends a right, in short, to the perpetual cultivation of receptivity, or vulnerability. When they neglect the painstaking cultivation of receptivity, Defoe's characters lay themselves open to the Lockean charge of “stupidity” and endanger their souls at the very same time. Defoe's novels, like Locke's *Essay*, answer to a pressing historical moment in which sensitivity necessarily supplies knowledge. Defoe writes as dissenters are excluded from traditional centers of learning, and therefore unable to justify nonconformist belief and practice as socially-current knowledge. Without bearing any obvious signs of dissenting identity, Defoe's protagonists nevertheless occupy a homologous place apart: they figure the experiential burden of Locke's empiricism, struggling to assemble from the simple encounters of sense experience a comprehensive system of knowledge. As tender consciences in this sense, they register the staggering task of constructing a body of shared knowledge in the absence of full cultural inclusion.

In the final chapter, I consider the participation of Samuel Richardson's novels in the "heart religion" that animates tender consciences of the eighteenth century. The genre's courtship plots have often been seen to render the (often female) reader's political exclusion and even desirable. Henry Fielding's *Shamela* gives voice to early readers who, far from warming to the novel's conciliatory union, were troubled by the sudden prospect of lively, receptive authors within established households, ready at a moment's notice to pen testimonies against their superiors. It was not without cause that Fielding tarred Pamela with the brush of Methodism, accusing her of reading, of all things, George Whitefield's autobiography. The maid, Fielding suggests, contracts her very subjectivity by infection. Fielding may have been responding to what critics have only lately discovered: Richardson was the editor of an early defense of the Methodist movement, soon to be the eighteenth century's fastest-growing denomination. Richardson's work, which makes the fainting delicacy of the domestic laborer wholly unremarkable, finds its counterpart in Wesley's open-air ministry, which famously moved coal miners to tears—and to take up writing.

Hume's contagious sympathy and Smith's impartial spectator revise and extend the tender conscience tradition up until our present moment. Twenty-first century debates over "safe spaces" and "snowflakes" suggest the urgency of a more expansive understanding of the vulnerability at the heart of liberalism and its fundamental, early modern recognition of fragility as the condition of political voice.

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INTRODUCTION

I. The Pamela Problem

The British novel has long disguised its innovations as documentary reporting, but from the outset, readers of *Pamela* found its first-person speaker freakishly unnatural. Samuel Richardson's first novel introduced readers to an excessively receptive observer whose ultimate perch atop the social hierarchy was presaged by an expansive command of narrative action.¹ Scholars within the critical tradition inaugurated by Ian Watt have distinguished the eighteenth-century novel from earlier prose fiction by the verisimilitude it achieves through circumstantial detail. This tradition, however, has yielded a surprising critical silence on the remarkable figure at the novel's center: a hyperconscious observer who possesses the ability to absorb and continuously recount experience in minute particularity, effortlessly and perpetually transforming perception into ordered, written narrative. Such voluble perception did not necessarily impart a sense of the real to eighteenth-century readers. It placed too great a strain on the reader's imagination, as Henry Fielding protested in *Shamela*, to suppose that a 15-year-old maid could eloquently register minute-by-minute occurrences in sharp, fine-grained detail.

Enthusiastic embrace in some quarters, skeptical opposition in others—the uneven assimilation of novelistic realism hints at the peculiar nature of its imagined subject, a strangeness obscured by the centuries-long process of its naturalization. Watt's account of the novel effaces this figure altogether by separating the formal innovation (“formal realism”) from the implied center of consciousness, supplying instead an array of circumstantial details, a string of percepts with no perceiver.² It's an incisive division and an extraordinarily productive one, presaging the focus of later theorists on the literary work as a text, forestalling the putatively naïve, humanist fascination with the “people” of literature—the moral values and aesthetic virtues of authors and their characters.³ With the more restricted category of formal realism, the rise of the novel becomes amenable to a crucially depersonalized epistemological gloss: the novel emerges out of the empiricism Watt associates with René Descartes and John Locke.

Watt's critical successors have carried forward his wariness about empiricism's consequences for modernity, making it in more than one sense the epistemology of critical disenchantment. Across the legal, historical, and scientific domains of the early modern period, Michael McKeon argues, truth descended to the sensory realm of material objects in particular: knowledge production came to rely on concrete evidence derived from the “collection of records... and the ‘objective’ testimony of documentary objects.”⁴ Adopting a more Foucauldian perspective, John Bender describes a ruthlessly rationalizing empiricism whose narrative strictures tighten across a range of cultural and social networks. The novel, along with other more openly disciplinary institutions, imposes formative constraints on aleatory experience, shaping subjects through confining them within realism's “fine, observationally ordered, materially exhaustive grid of representation.”⁵

For an early reader like Fielding, however, the persuasiveness of the novel's formal innovation and its power to exude a sense of the real crucially depend on its supposed emanation from the novelistic perceiver.⁶ What is at issue—long before the consolidation of “realism” as an independent category—is not so much the validity of new evidentiary canons or their representational grids than their imagined fitness to a certain kind of subject. The eighteenth-century novel encodes the throbbing perceiver in its very form, well before any distinct or defined character or even field of perception comes into view. The postulation of this sensitive perceiver in fiction was a source of scandal. The first-person narrators and epistolary forms of

eighteenth-century works are not, as discussions of the novel are occasionally in danger of suggesting, mere anticipations of the discreetly omniscient narrator and free indirect discourse of nineteenth-century realism. If the impersonally blended perspectives of the latter correspond to a scientific “view from nowhere” with percepts in excess of direct perception, *Experiencing the Novel* returns to an emergent empiricism, one still in search of fit percipients, and naïve in another sense: the eighteenth century’s garrulous narrators, who would soon become the objects of sympathy and identification, first met with ridicule from readers who found them unequal to the strange task of “exhaustive” narration.⁷ An impressionable character—so exceedingly sensitive that she absorbs, and more alarmingly, *records* environmental effluvia—did not look real or truthful so much as weird, a perverse hoarder of experiential trivia or a mutant species unto herself.⁸ A return to novelistic as well as empirical innocence is required to ask the question Fielding raised in the 1740s: how did it become possible to imagine, and ultimately to assume, the preternatural receptivity of an untutored writer?

II. A Culture of Sensitivity

Experiencing the Novel participates in the reevaluation of the familiar grounds of empiricism, considering how and why the category of experience came to be constituted, disseminated, and broadly identifiable within narrative bounds. The novel’s rise has elicited no shortage of subtle and inventive accounts; the emergence of modern empiricism and its distance from a comparatively desiccated model of the “hard” sciences, however, is only beginning to receive its due share of attention.⁹ The epistemological privilege of individual experience only obtains, I argue, when a particular mode of sensitive experience comes to be broadly respectable and replicable.¹⁰ Some of the most innovative recent studies of eighteenth-century narrative have taught critics how novels think, readers wonder, objects act, and accidents harm. Novelistic characters may be taken as the predicate to any number of analogous scholarly statements; very rarely, though, do they appear as either primary or willing subjects. This project considers how that phenomenon lately rendered illusory, then fully invisible—the motivated agency of subjects—might be reimagined through the experiences of novelistic figures.

As it recovers the severed phenomenological link between epistemological/formal realism and the novel’s imagined observer, this project encounters a whole group of Pamela’s forerunners who paved the way for a *sensitive* empiricism that drew on existing models of “feeling knowledge.” I will refer throughout this project interchangeably to “sensitivity” and the “tender conscience” despite the far more specialized meanings attached to the latter. In keeping with the genealogy traced out below, I intend the former term to expand the semantic range of the latter and to further interfere with the tendency to read “tenderness” as refined and usually demonstrative feeling. The sensitivity with which this project is concerned is, above all, a relative term that denotes an awareness heightened, often ever so slightly, beyond that which had been taken to be normal; it thus principally entails a receptivity to minor objects of perception that need not be announced at all.

By Locke’s time, as I will argue, it became possible to establish sensitivity more generally as the grounds of knowledge. Its prior influence in other domains of public life, then, should come as no surprise: the very capacity of this ideal to serve as a common disposition across so many fields seemed to Locke’s contemporaries to confirm its foundational status. Its authority is by definition diffusive. When an observer like Pamela assumes the epistemological high ground of sensitivity, she also advances a set of related political and ethical claims that conflict with her master’s.¹¹ The shock of Pamela’s narrative consciousness to which I have

already alluded could be forgotten not long after it was registered, for it recast a recognizable susceptibility to perception that had yet to enter prose fiction. From the twentieth-century perspective, the descriptive plenitude of the realist novel would recall, for Ann Banfield and others, the sensitive, “empty center” of the camera lens; the text itself, Roland Barthes mused, seemed “an intelligible organism of infinite sensibility.”¹² *Experiencing the Novel* tells the story of how and why this sensibility was first envisioned through subjective forms. Excess sensitivity became an epistemic and sociopolitical virtue long before the mid-eighteenth century culture of sensibility. The Pamela problem turns on the seventeenth-century emergence of sensitivity as a collectively-held ideal, one whose bounds—its presumed thresholds, its valid and invalid forms—came under increasing pressure as its purview expands.

The following chapters track the seismic shift in perceptions of sensitivity that reshaped the political realm and gave to literary history a new aesthetic form. The novel’s endlessly impressionable figure, as my project argues, must be traced back to the English Revolution, when the “tender conscience” was invented. Initially conceived of as a sensitivity to sin, this regulative ideal grew into a shared political principle. In the 1640s, self-identified “tender consciences” entered into print to plead against minor episcopal interventions; as lay believers explained, even these slight changes to public worship induced excruciating pain. By declaring themselves “tender consciences,” such citizens implicitly appealed to a Pauline theory of community-formation and its vision of a fluidly-formed collective that reshapes itself to meet the needs of the most vulnerable within it. By discovering their own tenderness, the subjects of Charles I acquired political voices. As an affective logic and moral language of resistance, the tender conscience ultimately justified regicide.

A forceful, community-binding complex of cognition, feeling, and ethics, the tender conscience persists well into the eighteenth century: it is the affective epistemology that drives Enlightenment thought from Lockean empiricism to Smithean sentimentalism. The myth of a long eighteenth century divided from the recent past has had near-paradigmatic status since its foundations were laid by the Restoration’s royalist victors. By setting aside this periodization, *Experiencing the Novel* unfolds a vision of lapsed possibilities; in so doing, it also reveals an enduring culture of dissent whose powerful recalibrations of affective norms shape popular politics, philosophy, and the culture of sensibility from the margins.

* * *

There was nothing inevitable about the tender conscience’s rise to prominence in the seventeenth century. Early modern English Bibles never mention the particular pairing, “tender conscience,” and its closest predecessor in the Pauline epistles, the “*weak* conscience,” is hardly an ideal.¹³ The following survey briefly suggests the conceptual contours that matter most to subsequent chapters; the tender conscience crucially develops, however, out of social practices. The complex I have in mind resembles what the historians William M. Reddy and Barbara Rosenwein have respectively termed “emotional regimes” or “emotional communities”: it draws on Reddy’s conception of political regimes legitimated by emotional norms, and partakes in Rosenwein’s recognition of the multiple, often overlapping, emotional orders that cut across any given polity.¹⁴ Raymond Williams’ notion of “structures of feeling” is even more apt for my purposes, since it calls attention to the present-tense dimensions of incipient history and the unfolding of social formations.¹⁵

As readers will observe, this conscience does not properly belong in any of the permeable categories that theorists have lately explored—it is not a feeling, emotion, affect, mood, or intensity; taken on its own, it is not even recognizable under the early modern rubric of the

passions. The transformation of the conscience into an affective complex is part of my story. I am partial to describing conscientious tenderness as an affect, since the term's physiological connotations merge so perfectly, for my purposes, into the simultaneous avowal of passivity and action. Given the fluidity of its historical development, the tender conscience is best conceived of as an affective complex comprised of multiple nested and continually evolving structures: the individual bearers of conscience and the collectives that idealize them, along with the overlapping internal contestations over the right expressions of conscientiousness.

This ideal redraws the familiar emotional landscape of historical narratives in which Puritan winter gives way to Enlightenment spring. The reflexivity of the tender conscience admits pain and makes no secret of its coercive operations, yet it hardly begins or ends in crushing guilt or repression. It makes itself known through metaphors of embodiment that, in turn, produce feeling knowledge. Its development, initially accounted for through a kind of moral biology (the regeneration of conscience), extends into a longer, collective process of cultivation (the honing of moral judgment as instinct). Both rational judgment and instinctual feeling, in turn, emerge as categories worthy of ethical inquiry. Their proportions are weighed against each other, for the tender conscience is often confronted with the question—am I having the right feelings about this judgment? And conversely—am I judging correctly when I feel thus strongly? Rather than considering the simple encounter with pain or negative affect in isolation, the tender conscience locates it within an integrated network of ethico-emotional response. The tender conscience is positioned within a larger community as well. To preserve its vital vulnerability, the conscience binds with others to appeal for a responsive tenderness from the larger collective to which it belongs.

To grasp the striking novelty of this complex, one must return to earlier instantiations of the conscience. The following survey considers an earlier metaphor of conscientious feeling (the gnawing worm), an elaborate practice of conscientious inquiry (casuistry), and the disembodied inner witness of the English Reformation (the individual Puritan conscience). By attending to the metaphorical constitution of the conscience, such a genealogy unsettles narratives that trace the possessive individual and a disintegrating, atomized society back to the seventeenth century. The organic metaphors that presuppose shared habitats—the parasitic worm, the bruised reed of English marshes—call forth the affective ecology that environed the individual. This structure of affective relations tends to elude the scope of scholarly vision precisely because it appears as merely transitional, as an inferior, intermediary form that awaits displacement by the extant institutions of modernity. But the significance of the tender conscience to the unfolding of history is hardly diminished by its failure to adequately contract itself into a “clear and distinct” concept in the Cartesian sense. The tender conscience and its constitutive tropes, when read as one of Hans Blumenberg's “absolute metaphors,” can be taken as those intuitive, core elements of thought and experience that ground intellection and historical action. The conscience and its metaphors are provisional but not therefore incoherent or incomplete. A genealogy of the tender conscience is also, then, the story of the unceasing realization of the compelling, elusive ideal—the metaphor—in history.¹⁶

III. The Worm, the Casuist, and the Bruised Reed

In the flowering of practical divinity that followed the Elizabethan Settlement, religious authors like Richard Greenham, Richard Sibbes, and William Perkins—whom this project treats as the century's most eloquent affect theorists—developed an informal but consistent ‘moral biology’ that centered on the total regeneration of the conscience.¹⁷ The traditional view of the

conscience as a faculty of moral reasoning would persist, but standard descriptions of its syllogistic operations were increasingly subordinated to new accounts of its instinctive expressions.¹⁸ If Protestant doctrine tended to make salvific transformation the definitive event of religious life, English Protestants made this change explicit through the tender conscience. This regenerate conscience was portrayed as a fundamentally altered condition of life—as critical and comprehensive as the baseline states of consciousness or health. Its keen sensitivity to sin was conceived from the body’s pre-cognitive reflexes. As English writers turned the vulnerable body’s sentience into the vital signs of conscience, their bodily metaphors suggested—and fostered—the perpetual immanence of conscientious feeling.¹⁹

The writers who shaped early modern structures of feeling could look back, of course, on a well-established Christian tradition that represented the pangs of conscience as physical suffering. Long before Dante’s gripping portrayals in the *Divine Comedy*, the Gospels’ allusion to “the worm [in hell] that dieth not” had been construed by Augustine as the *vermis conscientiae*.²⁰ The corrosive activity of this worm of conscience—akin to the maggots that feed on decaying flesh—begets endless pain that differs in kind rather than degree from that of the tender conscience. The worm, as a notably external agent of punishment, better reflects pre-Reformation experiences of a conscience whose power is more closely bound to the church and its sacraments.²¹ References to the parasitic worm decline over the course of the seventeenth century, giving way to an “indwelling,” tender conscience.²² Depictions of endlessly punitive pain and the body under siege give way to the consciousness associated with inner health and everyday vitality.

The pangs of conscience familiar in English literature from Margery Kempe to William Shakespeare confirm what no one doubts—conscientious feeling is not new. But these emotional features were considered accidental rather than essential, proper to poetry but only marginally relevant to ecclesiastical debates and moral theology.²³ It was an abstracted, rational conscience that entered into these latter realms. So for instance in the vestments controversy, when Elizabethan Puritans objected to such practices as kneeling and the use of the surplice, they appealed to this disembodied conscience. As a discourse, the tender conscience had yet to be developed, and thus is notably absent from the Cartwright-Whitgift debates of the 1570s. In a rousing defense of civil disobedience addressed to Bishop Whitgift, the Puritan Thomas Cartwright issues instead an account of the conscience as a seat of moral judgment:

If there be any thing wherein we do not according to that which is commanded, it is because we cannot be persuaded in our consciences that we may so do (whereof we are ready to render a reason out of the word of God); and, if that will not serve, forthwith to submit ourselves to that punishment that shall be awarded against us. And herein, we first call the Lord God to witness our meaning, and then we refer ourselves to the consciences of all men in the sight of God.²⁴

Cartwright’s conscience remains an abstracted inner sanctuary of deliberation wherein each man meets with himself, in the sight of God, to weigh his most deeply-held principles and beliefs. It’s a voiceless, disembodied space: the judgments of this tranquil and clear-sighted supreme court, significantly distinguished from the confines of the body, articulate themselves through the words of Scripture. The body can endure punishment at the hands of authorities, but the conscience must be defended at all costs, and spared such violations.

This rational conscience did not figure in public, rhetorical pronouncements alone: casuistry, the branch of moral theology concerned with the conscience, similarly presents a conscience whose discursive judgments are distinguished from corporeal experience. Since the thirteenth-century call for annual confession, encyclopedic *summas* had been assembled to aid priestly confessors; from out of these grew works of casuistry to advise on tricky cases.²⁵ The alphabetical compendia gave way in the last half of the sixteenth century to Jesuit works that would often open with a general exposition about the conscience and its syllogistic operations, before proceeding to what resembles case law, organized according to the Decalogue or the Seven Deadly Sins.²⁶ A section anchored by the Fifth Commandment might progress from examining the ethical status of a single, clearly prohibited act of murder to its murkier permutations—parricide, infanticide, and suicide.²⁷ The whole weight of church tradition could be brought to bear on a given case, and a wide range of authorities cited to reach resolutions that could vary from casuist to casuist. The high casuistry of the mid-sixteenth century, in its aspirations to be both methodical and exhaustive, assimilates even borderline cases to a worldview in which all activity can be subsumed under one of two ethical categories. In its more tortuous applications, casuistry blurs the distinction of permissible and impermissible, but it is arguably these worst excesses—the dogged efforts to establish innocence in the eyes of divine and ecclesiastical law—that attest to its assent to governing divisions of right and wrong.²⁸

The interpretive creativity of casuists belies the basic understanding often found in expository introductions of the conscience as a bearer of immutable, transcendent standards. Continental casuists envisioned a conscience that crucially retains an inclination towards virtue in a component known as the *synderesis*, a repository of moral first principles in which the divine spark or the *imago Dei* can be glimpsed.²⁹ The syllogistic operations imagined as proceeding from this storehouse of moral axioms place the conscience squarely within classical and medieval paradigms that take ideal, geometric forms and mathematical theorems as models of truth and certainty. Case resolutions could vary, but casuistical works share a commitment to recording, in a kind of cumulative proof, the moral and ecclesiastical justifications likely to make a resolution the right one.³⁰ If the distinction between mortal and venial sins helps confessors specify degrees of culpability after the fact, casuistry offers the body of knowledge that can be consulted beforehand on questions of liability. So the four categories identified in one popular Jesuit work—the conscience *opinante*, *scrupulosa*, *dubia*, or *errante*—can be taken as gradations of increasing liability.³¹ The act that cannot be committed with a good, clean conscience might still be permissible if casuists conclude for it a conscience *opinante* or *scrupulosa*. The emotional pressure of achieving a final determination remains outside the text.³² In its characteristic language of juridical precision, casuistry is much more concerned to quantify doubt and establish judgments of consistent stringency.³³

When English Protestants in the seventeenth century sought to articulate the workings of conscience, they looked to continental casuistry as their most immediate inheritance, but departed from its legal-deontological framework. Casuistry, needless to say, does not disappear from the English intellectual universe, and its analytical terms retain their currency for some time.³⁴ But the significance of the English departure from traditional casuistry should not be underestimated. English casuists, as Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin have pointed out, rarely bothered with canon law. What is more, they observe, English divines from William Perkins onward openly “proclaimed as their purpose the *formation* of the conscience of the Christian.”³⁵ William Ames perfectly conveys the common sense of indebtedness alongside an unabashed desire to supersede casuistry: “The Papists have labored much [in the way of conscience]. . . . But

they are without the life of this Doctrine. . . . The thing it selfe requires, that by others, other things bee taught, and the same things, after another manner.”³⁶ Ames announces the inauguration of a new method. His fellow divines, through sermons and consolatory works, would impart to the conscience the distinguishing feature to which Ames alludes: life. Their advocacy of a new spiritual vitality would be expressed in the language of biological sentience.

William Perkins’ taxonomy sets aside casuistry’s consideration of specific acts, establishing in its place a framework with physiological categories that identify varying states of health. The *benumbed* conscience he elucidates “reigns in the hearts of drowsy Protestants . . . commonly termed civil honest men”; it permits a false sense of respectability by reacting only to socially significant infractions. The *seared* conscience is unresponsive even to the most heinous crimes. In Perkins’ words, it is “not only bereft of sense, life, and motion by the gangrene, but also is burnt with a searing yron: and therefore must needs be utterly past all feeling.” The tender conscience, by contrast, is the “stirring,” or “wounded” one.³⁷ The goal of works like Perkins’ is to resuscitate, as it were, the insensate conscience, and to help readers detect its sensations.

It has no place among the Seven Deadly Sins, yet numbness for Puritan theologians comes to signify the innate condition of spiritual death. In some cases, the doctrinal weight given to original sin shifts the center of gravity away from conceptions of vice as the loosened grip of reason on the will and passions.³⁸ In its many allusions to unrestrained passions, the English lexicon of opprobrium assumes the imagery of dispersal; vice’s inability to contain itself is registered in terms ranging from “dissolution” and “dissipation” to “loose living” and “licentiousness.” Puritan writers of practical divinity, however, were concerned above all to show sinners in possession of a hardened, unfeeling resistance. Only through the transformative work of grace does the stony, hardened heart finally soften into flesh.³⁹ In its healthiest, active form, one divine explained, “the *heart of flesh* promised [is] . . . a tender Conscience.”⁴⁰ The painful awakening of the conscience was well-documented, especially following Calvin. Through the preaching ministry of English Calvinist ministers, the Old Testament law was applied with fresh earnestness to prod the conscience to life in a process variously described as pricking, wounding, or bruising.

The injurious effects of this prodding loom large in the scholarly imagination. Critics have long been fascinated with the excessively sensitive, suspicious souls such as those described in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.⁴¹ “Every small object affrights them,” Robert Burton explains, attributing the malady of these pathologically tender consciences to “indiscreet pastors.” Such pastors “thunder out Gods Judgments without respect,” Burton complains, “. . . making every small fault and a thing indifferent an irremissible offence, [thus wounding] men’s consciences, that they are almost at their wits’ ends.”⁴² To guard against conscientious desperation, however, Burton’s contemporaries penned a whole class of consolatory works that offered the comfort of the Gospels.⁴³ From these texts, Calvinism’s filiation with experimental religion becomes obvious.⁴⁴ When the Puritan Robert Bolton comforts the “evangelically afflicted,” he envisions an emotionally charged scene of reconciliation:

Now do all the promises of life in Gods blessed Booke offer themselves [to] . . . his wearied soule . . . full sorely bruised with stormes of terrour . . . God the Father, his bowells of tenderest compassion . . . runnes, that I may so say, as the Father [of the prodigal son] in the Gospell, . . . with the kisses of his sweetest mercy.⁴⁵

Such depictions of tender treatment work to prevent the prodding of the unfeeling, flinty heart from devolving into the vicious bruising of a live, beating one.

Burton's melancholy—and its attendant tone of Calvinist paranoia—has been often made the dominant key of an age whose broader doctrinal context renders it only a contrapuntal strand. English Protestants, following Luther, styled themselves in opposition to Catholicism's ostensibly legal burdens, and saw themselves as the inheritors of a distinctly Protestant sense of compassion, a conviction intensified by the circulation of John Foxe's account of the Marian martyrs. When Andrew Willet insists on the Savior's exemplary "meekness and compassion" in *A Catholicon... Against the Pseudocatholike Religion* (1602), he conceives of it as a particularly Protestant insight.⁴⁶ The Calvinist discomfort of coming to consciousness was seen as inseparable from—and a small price to pay for—the consciousness of divine love. Those continuing in suspicion and self-doubt, moreover, were met in print and pulpit with, if not immediate comfort, a refuge in which to grieve. Willet depicts Christ's gentleness through an oft-quoted verse subsequently held up as a model (perhaps to Burton's "indiscreet pastors") for dealing with tender consciences; this passage would appear again and again in seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographies:

As it was prophesied of our Saviour, [quoting Matt. 12.20] *A bruised reede shall he not break, and smoking flaxe shall he not quench*, ... a reed already bruised neede not to be broken... so a tender conscience, as a greene and tender wound, not yet corrupt and festered, is gently and tenderly to be handled.⁴⁷

Writers of practical divinity were at pains to emphasize that Christ, as good shepherd and careful husbandman, tended especially to tender consciences; ministers were enjoined to follow suit.

Centuries earlier, Chaucer's Prioress had burst into weeping fits, "al... conscience and tendre herte" at the pain of her pampered pets.⁴⁸ Tenderness, as the Prioress' affected refinement suggests, had long been the prerogative of a cloistered gentility. In the hands of Puritan writers, the mantle of tenderness moves from the cultivated elite to any returning prodigal. In a more abstract sense, talk of divine tenderness, and in particular the lavish care afforded to tender consciences, had the effect of supplying a familiar emotional structure—a dyadic one that encompassed a tender response, the omission of which was coded as harsh and inhumane. As we'll see, the vicissitudes of the Civil War turned in part on this new vision of power, which parts ways from the familiar king-as-father trope inasmuch as the weaker party sets the agenda, so to speak. Far from authorizing the empowered party to act on her behalf, the more vulnerable member expects the restrained use of power.⁴⁹

Throughout the seventeenth century, authors attest to the very specific ways in which the physiological traits of the tender conscience and the trope of the bruised reed are made to signify. The bodily language suggests an instinctual immediacy that bypasses the elongated, syllogistic depictions of scholastic works. In a simile so popular the vehicle would come to define its tenor, the tender conscience morphs into the eye. Richard Alleine in 1660 sums up what had become a truism:

True tenderness of conscience is the perfection of it; a truly tender conscience... is quick of sense, and presently feels, and smarts, and is put to pain with any thing that is really an offence to it. A tender conscience is as the eye, the least dust that's blown into it, will make it smart... [from] wickedness of sense.⁵⁰

Descriptions of the conscience drift into physico-theological celebrations of the eye's haptic capabilities. As another writer explains,

A good conscience, is a tender conscience: and a tender conscience, is like the *apple of the eye*: for as the least *haire* or *dust* grieves and offends that which the skinne of the eyelid would not complaine of: So a good and tender conscience, is disquieted...even with such as the world accounts trifles.⁵¹

In these celebrations of the new Christian ideal, the eye's role in sight all but disappears. Its most remarkable power lies in its extraordinary vulnerability.⁵²

Authors throughout the period resort to the body's most delicate surfaces to express the conscience's sensitivity to the pain of the pinprick. English writers allude with a new sense of immediacy to the Latin etymology of the "scruple" as the tiny pebble underfoot. No pebble is too trivial when it radiates pain through the foot's tender sole; in it, the literal "stumbling block" of scandal appears in miniature.⁵³ When a sermon's auditor recalls convictions that "touched [him] to the quick," he refers to a stinging sensation applied to another liminal part of the body: the "quick" is the delicate skin normally shielded by the fingernails.⁵⁴ Such metaphors turn on bodily surfaces sensitive enough to make vast expanses of skin seem callous by comparison.

To the theorists of conscience, the slender cover of nail and eyelid pointed to a divinely-sanctioned vulnerability that accords with the complex Calvinistic understanding of pain. A very thin line separates the invigorating, protective pain of the responsive conscience from the piercing pain that destroys its sensitivity; the struggle to draw this line in the 1640s made it a fissure of seismic proportions. If such fine sensations seem too insubstantial to motivate political action, one should recall that the bodily metaphors, as virtual meditations on incommensurability, anticipate such objections: the eye, tiny as it is, can open onto sublime vistas, and the quick, at the margins of the body, can overwhelm the entire being. As the eye to the body, so the tender conscience to the body politic. It is the Puritan's sense of his lowly, obscure position within the divine and political order which, in the 1640s, renders him significant.

This unlikely alignment is one John Milton dramatizes in *Samson Agonistes*: if downtrodden, then loved and significant. Tellingly, Samson longs through blind despair to feel the stirrings of conscience. His complaints include a fantasy of radical consciousness indebted to the theorists of conscience, particularly his meditation on the eye's second sense—its haptic receptivity—that exceeds the primary organ for touch. If the eye can be granted this superior sense of feeling, why must the skin be deprived of extraordinary vision? Samson contemplates a second sight which draws the eye's sensitivity across the moral and physical being: the sight will not be confined to the "tender ball" alone, but "as feeling through all parts diffus'd."⁵⁵ Beyond the immediate suggestion of likeness (sight should be as widely distributed as feeling), the text imagines the faculty of sight spread over the body "as feeling"—that is, in its full visual and haptic receptivity. In Milton's paradisaical world, this longing for the supercharged but vulnerable body is also a desire for exquisite, angelic sensitivity; in this postlapsarian one, Samson's longing is insupportable, like the absurd wish of becoming a walking eyeball. A surreal image of vulnerability, this vision ultimately meets its tragic realization in the hero's conscientious regeneration.

The sensitivity of the conscience so impressed itself on seventeenth-century minds that sensible organisms appeared as illustrations of conscientious processes. As one nonconformist minister explains in 1661,

the Plant-animal, or the sensible Plant so called, when it is touched, shrinks up, and contracts itself; the sinner shrinks when he is touched in the sore place. The eye is a tender part and apt to be offended, if you meddle with it.⁵⁶

As the plant-animal—the transplants of Scripture’s bruised reed—reprises its role as fragile plant, it also embodies sensitivity’s heavenly progress.⁵⁷ An upwardly mobile being, the sensible plant defies traditional philosophical and scientific divisions, springing through its responsive instincts from nutritive to sensitive soul, and the vegetable to the animal kingdom. More politically-inclined observers might note the special nurture required by the period’s so-called “humble plant”: with its keen consciousness of self and other, it requires the preservation of boundaries.⁵⁸ The chapter on Milton takes up the political consequences of the conscience’s “apt[ness] to be offended”—its increasing sensitivity to violations of all kinds.

When T.S. Eliot first mourned the “dissociation of sensibility” in which the “direct sensuous apprehension of thought” had been lost to British poetry, he blamed Milton; in 1947, after a quarter century’s worth of reflection, he revised his assessment of the poet but not the age:

to lay the burden on the shoulders of Milton and Dryden was a mistake. . . . all we can say is, that something like this did happen; that it had something to do with the Civil War; that it would be unwise to say it was caused by the Civil War, but that it is a consequence of the same cause which brought about the Civil War. . . .⁵⁹

For the poet who, unlike Milton, found his way into the Anglican Church, the dissociation of sensibility followed from the dissolution of traditional society. The severance of kingly head from body politic in the 1640s marked a rupture succeeded, in this view, by factionalism and party spirit, skepticism and rationalism—all of which could be identified with the creator of *Paradise Lost*. Against a broken monarchy, Milton’s poetic grandeur rings hollow, the bombast and declamation weakly aspiring to the “real” grandeur that attends a unified church and state. The poet must now alternate between the intellectual task (to “justify the ways of God to men”) and an aesthetic one (those epic similes); Milton’s own radical politics created the need for the former in the first place. This study adopts Eliot’s refusal to cede sensibility to the most mawkish displays of eighteenth-century sentimentalism, and shares in the poet’s commitment to defining sensuous thought as broadly as possible, with an eye to its religious, political, and aesthetic dimensions. But what Eliot recognizes as dissolution will appear, across this work, as a long-term project seeking new consociations of sensibility; at the poet’s dissociation, I shall argue, the tender conscience emerges alongside the desire for new forms of political life.

IV. An Affective History of the Present

My conception of sensibility’s breadth and the tender conscience as a complex of *longue durée* has been informed, in part, by a number of recent “affective histories of the present.” Julie Ellison’s *Cato’s Tears: The Making of Anglo-American Emotion* likewise delves into the prehistory of sensibility; she considers the prevalence of liberal guilt at the turn of the millennium by seeking its early modern precursors. Ellison’s study takes within its purview a

long eighteenth century that begins at the Exclusion Crisis, and identifies a recurrent pattern within and across literary texts in which figures of neo-Roman stoicism (the Whig patriot, the virtuous republican, the agent of empire) are shadowed by teary-eyed men of feeling. Ellison recognizes how the tears of sentimental fiction worked to oil the imperial machine. Thinking through the phenomenon of liberal guilt, however, leads her somewhat surprisingly to locate in these texts “indices of the pain caused by political arrangements from which artists and intellectuals knowingly benefited but at the same time could not control.”⁶⁰

The paired emotions of Ellison’s reading gesture away from either unmediated self-expression or transpersonal contagion. Within the relational frame she establishes, the dual emotions assume a collective logic across the nodal points of their expression. They partner to reproduce the worst kinds of systemic inequality, the forms of which yet remain; they make visible, too, the affective negotiations that likewise persist in response. I am struck by the critical gaze Ellison trains on the critic, the intellectual who may strenuously oppose *and yet* benefit from those structures she finds so objectionable. Readers of the following chapters will recognize how this project sets aside liberal guilt to reformulate a question raised by *Cato’s Tears*. *Experiencing the Novel* returns to a formative period of liberalism to pursue the problem of what, if anything, shared signs of disaffection then and now, from the parading of public grief to virtual expressions of outrage, have to do with sustained or organized forms of collective action.

Lauren Berlant has since suggested that the model of trauma to which political disaffection has come to be allied is insufficient; the more pressing concern, she argues, has to do with the normalization of constant crisis that incites disengagement. One does not have to share Berlant’s politics to appreciate the acuity with which she diagnoses a contemporary tendency to push for a *sense* of belonging (as opposed to better terms for belonging) that answers to the precarious conditions of the present. Almost a decade before Berlant, Nancy Fraser addressed a related tension between “identity politics” and more thoroughgoing notions of sociopolitical justice. Fraser proposes a framework of justice that encompasses both the politics of redistribution and the prior politics of “recognition.” By advancing a notion of “recognition,” Fraser aims to de-emphasize claims of injury to identity, or what others conceive of as impediments to self-realization, in favor of a coordinated effort to achieve parity of social participation. Claims to harm, she argues, are too often understood in exclusively psychological terms, leaving injured parties with a disproportionate burden of proof and questions of redress largely undefined. The social and economic aspects of justice, she writes, equally require the acknowledgment that

some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction... as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them.⁶¹

Fraser’s “recognition”—the acknowledgement of injustice that brackets the felt harm of injury—answers, in some sense, to a wariness she shares with Berlant about the political claims of trauma.

From Berlant’s vantage point in the early twenty-first century, the prolonged crisis of the present does not allow for cool reflections on justice; it demands a new understanding of the work of politics. Berlant attends to what exceeds the rationality of Fraser’s call for “recognition”; she delivers what is at once a critical and unusually sympathetic assessment of felt necessity.

Current demands for “acceptance” or “belonging,” either in the weak sense or as ends in themselves, assume the structure of what Berlant terms “cruel optimism,” a relation in which certain attachments and fantasies of the good life inhibit flourishing in fundamental ways *even as* they allow subjects to get by and make do. Berlant’s work supplies a missing link: cruelly optimistic forms of striving (for assimilation, for social mobility) do not always lift themselves into more comprehensive frameworks of justice, not least of all because those modes of striving fuel—or at least are felt to fuel—survival itself.

Berlant’s consideration of the exigencies that produce unattainable but self-consistent accounts of desire and motivation leads her to propose a new temporality for politics. Calling for a reinvention of publicness, she envisions a lateral politics located “in a commitment to the present activity of the senses. It sees the work of citizenship as a dense sensual activity of performative belonging . . .”⁶² To subjects worn down into either self-contained fantasies of betterment or despairing detachment, Berlant urges a politics that would begin anew by tending—aesthetically and otherwise—to the attachments that keep alive the possibility of coming together. The possibility of establishing consensual narratives of the good life, Berlant further suggests, must follow from a renewed grasp of the sentient dimensions of “doing politics” and the pleasure held out by collective rituals of “becoming-democratic.”⁶³

There is nothing liberatory about affect-laden experience in and of itself; across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ideals of sensuous belonging were all too easily conscripted into gendered and racialized hierarchies of difference.⁶⁴ The tender conscience, with its attendant experiences and art forms, might nevertheless offer one mode through which Berlant’s sensuous experience of political belonging can be reimagined. The assumptions bound up with the tender conscience have a part to play in giving voice to pain outside what has become the overburdened framework of trauma. The tender conscience returns us to a prior ground in which pain is registered, not least of all, as that which threatens the possibility of feeling as well as trauma; even more so than the precise location of pain, injury inheres in the danger that collective sensitivity might be altogether lost. What do we have to lose when this pain is dismissed too easily or invoked too frequently? How do conceptions of collective responsibility or minority claims change when they are understood to have been alternately clarified and confused through religious discourse?

Experiencing the Novel dwells at length on the intersection of popular politics and popular religion, that charged confluence of modernity that does not find a ready place in affective histories of the present; it raises far more questions in the process than it answers. Perhaps this is only appropriate for a work that retrieves a historical structure within which problems were continually debated and violently contested, never definitively resolved. This project aims to supply a shared set of texts through which the impasses of public sensitivity can be debated and apprehended as problems with a past and a future. And it entertains the possibility that literary criticism might require the pleasurable creation of shared experience—not the direct, authentic encounter with a reality that emanates from self or text, but the imaginative, strenuous attempt to summon out of texts those points of contact which they would otherwise deny.

V. From Occult Awareness to Sensitive Experience

To return, then, to literary history. The Elizabethan era produced no shortage of popular fiction and pseudo-factual prose, but the rise of the novel postdates this period; a look at its experiments with first-person narrators suggests why. Not unlike Richardson’s scribbling female

servant, the lively, hyperconscious figures of William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1570) and the Martin Marprelate tracts (1588-89) pose a social threat by virtue of their intense receptivity to minutiae. The sheer oddity of these texts discloses the *literary* challenge of devising a first-person position from which to articulate political disaffection in this period. The sensitivity with which this project is concerned, again, has less to do with the refined effusions found in the romances of Philip Sidney or Mary Wroth; I am interested in those representations of keen perception which can but need not involve heightened emotional awareness. For Baldwin and the Marprelate authors, this keen perception registers a fraught contemporary issue—clerical wrongdoing—and comes to be foregrounded at the level of style; both sets of texts rather self-consciously deploy narrative persona as a form of opposition and mode of argument.

Decorum, which comes in for explicit discussion in the Marprelate tracts, condenses a critical insight—styles of writing register styles of being in the world. It is not for nothing that decorum is associated with socially restrictive convention: low people get low style, and so on. When the Marprelate speaker first enters print, he immediately addresses the construction of his persona. The bishops' bad behavior, he announces, has forced him from all bounds of *decorum personae*; he promptly embraces a raucous, convention-busting persona that attends to all kinds of threatening details. He shares something in common with the stage fools and court jesters later associated with Shakespeare, but what Christopher Hill calls Marprelate's "witty, rumbustious, savage" style goes far beyond counsel couched in jocoserious strains. From publicizing prelates' domestic quarrels to clearly listing the addresses of citizens who have been wronged by the bishops, Marprelate gleefully piles on criminal act after act of slander and libel, justifying his conduct through what Presbyterians understood to be emergency conditions. His intent is destructive, to make politics as usual impossible; his unorthodox persona is called into existence for the very purpose of registering the status quo as unbearable.

As innovative as this eidolon is, its mode is still broadly satirical. Baldwin's marvelous work extends this mode to satirize the persona of the political witness. The literary constitution of such witnesses must answer to the question of how and why it is that they apprehend wrongdoing that is somehow both widespread and not obvious. *Beware the Cat* meets this challenge with an outrageous solution, toying with the techniques of verisimilitude to make its fabulous elements even more absurd, making a satiric butt along the way of its most earnest key witness. Master Streamer begins his tale of strange encounters by laying the circumstantial particulars on thickly. In London not long ago, he reports, he had been staying at

a friend's house of mine, which...standeth at Saint Martin's Lane end and hangeth partly upon the town wall that is called Aldersgate [where he was]...lodged in a chamber hard by the Printing House, which had a fair bay window opening into the garden, the earth whereof is almost as high as Saint Anne's Church top, which standeth thereby. (9-10)

At this site, Streamer reports, he pursued a course of suspicious treatments, "one piece of mine own experimenting," as he explains it.

The elaborate, day-long experiment, which ranges from ingesting a fox's heart to sucking on lozenges of cat dung, leaves Streamer with senses so exquisitely refined that he can hear everything. The music of the spheres is delightful, he reports, but all else was "so disordered and monstrous that I could discern no one from other" (31). His overwhelming sensitivity to the noises that roar about him—the "sewing of socks, cackling of hens, scrabbling of pens, peeping of mice"—recalls nothing so much as George Eliot's famous lines on everyday dullness:

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.

Unencumbered by the realism Eliot would so powerfully define, Baldwin inflicts his narrator with the insupportable awareness the novelist imagines. Streamer does not die, but he is driven out of human society: he cowers in a dark chimney and smothers his ears with pillows until nightfall, when he peers through a hole in the attic to watch what turns out to be a coven of witch-worshipping cats.

As a disorienting undertow, the proto-novelistic particulars of Baldwin's text draw readers into a realm where all cats know each other and werewolves may or may not exist. Prior to offering his experimental account, Streamer gradually reveals what he knows through hearsay—an occult feline network seems to stretch from London to the rural villages and all the way to Ireland. The suspenseful and somewhat meandering elaboration of this premise contrasts sharply with the tale's clear, elegant structure that becomes evident in hindsight: each of three narrative frames progressively decreases in levels of probability until the final one places us in the court of talking cats. As the reader's credulity is increasingly strained, the text's referential urgency correspondingly increases. Streamer listens as the feline assembly invokes Lord Cammloch, who is said to possess "the empire of his traitorously murdered mother the goddess Grimolochin" (36); at the mention their lord's name, "all the cats spread along their tails and cried, 'Hagat and Heg save him'" (36-37). Lurking behind these pagan rituals is Baldwin's topical critique of ecclesiastical courts, the arms of seemingly arbitrary power that would be confronted—and finally abolished—in the English Revolution. The female, first-person speaker of the final narrative, a cat named Mouse-Slayer, stands trial for the wicked act of resisting rape. The bulk of the core narrative thus consists of a testimony in which "the Devil's cat" presents the commendable acts of mischief that should acquit her (54).

Throughout the successive frames, Baldwin plays with first-person narrators and the fiction of the authentic eyewitness. To the question of how one attains the apprehension of political corruption, Baldwin answers—by being a cat or a hallucinating alchemist. The text holds its key witnesses in derision even as it relies on them, suggesting the wrong end of a Faustian bargain: the suprasensible vision of the critic can only be attained by being inhuman or at least thrust outside the bounds of human society. For Baldwin, the sort of person required to apprehend political minutiae—that corruption which everyone might recognize but cannot bear to notice all the time—must be a monstrous perversion of a man.

* * *

As even a brief glimpse of these works reveal, the stakes of acute narrative perception are incredibly high. Sixteenth-century authors sought a literary genre of wrongdoing alongside a compelling first-person position through which public shame could be announced. In the next century, the tender conscience played a role in producing both. One seventeenth-century artisan sets the tone by observing the following about shame in his notebook:

Christian reader I did writ downe these mercies of God...[but] I was in mind to have burnt it in the fier and so destroyed it, because I was ashamed that any should here of this

my sinnes...But now with better consideration I am contented to shame myself to the world, so that I may bring glory to God.⁶⁵

One of the most prolific writers of his generation, the wood-turner Nehemiah Wallington proceeded to pen over 20,000 pages between 1618-1654; over 2,000 of these pages are extant. He demurred against those “earnestly importuning [him] to print some of [his] books,” but intended his writing to be circulated in manuscript, carefully cataloguing the titles of his 47 notebooks.⁶⁶ For someone without much to leave his family in the way of material possessions, these volumes were, as he noted, his most important gifts.

Wallington undertook these extraordinary labors, he explains, as the very practice of the tender conscience: “conscience inforces me to begine to write...[a] day booke of my sins and Experienced Marcys” (296). The voice of this conscience can be fiercely accusing, as Wallington indicates; it can also be warmly affectionate: “Oh says consciences [*sic*] why wilt thou wound me which am so loving and tender a freend to thee, or why wilt thou offend so loving a God and prof[vo]ke so marcifull and tender a Father [?]” This conscience attends to the vicissitudes of daily experience. “The XIX of January [1641] at two a cloke in the morning,” as he recalls, for instance, “I could scars lye in my bead being much troubled with thoughts how to pay my deats” (148); this same conscience also leads him to confess.

Flirtations with adultery—the subject which Samuel Pepys’s diary records in coded terms—are circulated in Wallington’s case for the edification of both his family and the larger community of manuscript readers. Wallington recalls

Gods grat merci to me: that when I tempted one to comit sinne with me in jesting and dalliance: but shee resisted mee...But behold a gratter mercy of God to mee, That shee whom I did tempte and had a lust unto, shee I say came unto my house when I was alone and went into my bead: But God kept me, and his strength was seene in my weeknesse, in keeping mee, that I did not commit follye with her. (45)

Wallington, who alludes more than once to his struggles with lust, invites readers to witness his weaknesses more generally as a husband, not only in the terms of strict fidelity but in his failure to be adequately tender:

O now if I should stand before the great Judge of all the world what would conscience say? O how have I been to my relations, as an husband to my wife; have I carried myself as a man of knowledge, loving and tender to her, comforting her in sorrow? O have I not rather many a time added sorrow to sorrow with unkind carriages and bitter words and foolish behavior? (339)

Wallington’s wife Grace did not fill any notebooks of her own, but the circulation of her husband’s questions invites those narratives only she can provide; as we will see, the voices of women like Grace would resonate through the spiritual autobiographies of the next generation.

Wallington’s literary habits were enabled by a regular routine. Before the start of each day, Wallington would rise around 4 a.m. for a period of private meditation. Through his written reflections on these moments, he reviews his experiences and the state of his affections, grieving when he finds his heart inadequately unmoved by apprehensions of God’s love. He muses one morning that

[I]t is good to have a soft heart...but I have just cause to think I have made an Idol of my teers for I have thought very well of myselfe when I have shed teers and...[mistakenly believed that] if I have not sheed teeres then it could not be well with me...[T]here is pride in Humility...I have just cause to weepe and lament over my teers. (201-202)

The Puritan artisan is someone who thinks and writes about his tears. Outside of what seems to be his full-time work of writing, Wallington makes a living as a woodworker, and manages to take readers into the shop with him as well. Never a wealthy man, Wallington recalls business conflicts like the one that ensued when a customer leaves him with a brass shilling. Having been duped, Wallington struggles over whether or not to pass the coin onto unwitting customers; the episode ends with a deliverance (a chapman takes the coin despite Wallington's warning) and a resolution (Wallington takes a hammer to the rest of the counterfeit currency in his shop).⁶⁷

The generic cast of Wallington's mind will not surprise those familiar with the line of scholarship stemming from the classic studies of G. A. Starr and J. Paul Hunter. But the extreme example of Wallington reminds us that pulpit enjoinders to keep a "day-book" tended, as with most pieces of good advice, to be mostly honored in the breach. The artisan who persists in noting down his reflections over the course of four decades stands out conspicuously among the citizens of London; Wallington's radical enactment of common counsel is part of what makes him a member of a religious minority. The Puritan's voluminous writing discloses his voracious reading—of godly tracts as well as the period's unending stream of news pamphlets. His inward sensitivity had a transitive property, extending outwards to the ordering of the commonwealth. The unknown turner recognized that he was living through unprecedented times and wrote incessantly about current events: one historian finds Wallington quoting from over 300 of the pamphlets that now comprise the British Library's collection.⁶⁸ The conscientious gaze he trained on himself in the house did not stop outside of his shop doors; introspection, in Wallington's example, enlarges into a troublesome kind of national circumspection.

Scholars have yet to recognize what was politically provocative about the diary-writing citizen of the 1640s. Ministers who advised parishioners to keep day-books for their consciences associated this practice with instances of inspired writing: the psalmist David's confessional tone was praised as an example, and even the apostles, one commentator argued, probably transcribed the Gospels from out of "their Day-books, wherein they recorded [Christ's] daily Oracles."⁶⁹ But the most famous example of an English diarist seems to have been John Bradford, the Marian martyr. "Memorable was the practise of blessed Bradford," one writer wrote in 1623, repeating as a pun the sentiment that had been circulating in print a half century earlier. "He used to make unto himselfe a *Journall* or *day-booke* wherein he used to set downe all such notable things as either hee did see or heare each day that passed."⁷⁰ The typically reverential tones with which the writing habits of the dead Protestant are described are remarkable, in and of themselves: it is as if the most marvelous achievement of this hero of the faith was, apparently, to keep a journal. One might recall that John Foxe spurned the title attached to his work: he did not write the *Booke of Martyrs*, he insisted. He wrote a book entitled the *Actes and Monuments*. Read in this light, Bradford's passive acts of witness—writing a diary, becoming an ash heap—take on monumental significance: they are *acts*, first and foremost. It was possible for Wallington's contemporaries in the 1630s to conceive of this early English diarist not as a saintly martyr but a day-book dissident.

Shielded for most part by his relative obscurity, Wallington would nevertheless come under scrutiny in the 1630s as a likely reader of seditious literature. The crown's authorities were seeking information about the circulation of pamphlets authored by the most well-known seditious libellers of the period—Henry Burton, John Bastwick, and William Prynne. Characteristically, Wallington notes down each question posed to him by the Crown attorney; he records his own answers as well. His account of this Star Chamber interrogation is marked by a tonal break with the rest of his writings: his usual assessments bemoaning the ungodly state of England offer a stark contrast to the affectively muted portrayal of this episode. The most deafening silence of the Wallington corpus, I would argue, lies in the absence of conscientious doubt in these matters. It is true that he worries beforehand about taking an oath that may be compromising, but he has no qualms at all about having read the seditious pamphlets that were the focus of the investigation. The turner who never misses a chance to think in writing about perceived misdeeds wastes no time wondering about the legality of his actions. But he does not defend what he takes to be perfectly legitimate conduct with any defiance either: both in his retelling of the examination and his reflections on it, he is quiet and unusually serene. Wallington's responses to the Crown attorney—which strike me as exemplarily tender—provide some sense of what has changed since the dignified “last stands” of earlier Protestants. Wallington admits to reading the offending pamphlets without supplying the least justification. When asked if he has circulated any pamphlets, he delivers a slightly more fulsome and, I think, funny reply given its awkward self-incrimination. Wallington admits first to having shared one pamphlet with a neighbor, then confesses that this circulation scared him so much that he requested to have the pamphlet back before burning it. This is hardly a brave confession, and yet Wallington is relieved, as he writes, to have “stood firm.”

In this era of bruised reeds, conscientious figures can declare their “timorousness” to authorities, and then proceed to immortalize their timorous reports in writing. What would it mean to think of the artisan as taking a stand *to be scared*? The next chapter takes up the related question: what would it mean to “take a stand” to declare one's pain, to make a public announcement of one's affective burdens? This episode gestures towards a broader tendency in this period towards rearguard radicalism, which would just be a more cumbersome term for “moderate Puritanism” if not for the way it captures that stance of tentative resistance which supplied the working vocabulary for revolutionary action. This radicalism could be characterized, as in Wallington's Star Chamber encounter, by a paradoxical compound: a conscientious serenity harnessed to vocal susceptibility—the unequal yoke, perhaps, of epistemological modesty.

The printed circulation of a detailed, first-person account like Wallington's in the 1640s could not have been taken as an apolitical act. Sensitivity itself carried seditious implications: a diarist keen on grieving over his own wrongs was ready, after all, to detect corruption elsewhere. Citizens like Wallington, who quietly gave thanks when the archbishop and king were executed, turned the English Revolution into an event with literary consequences; they did not exactly dance on the king's grave, but they penned spiritual autobiographies on it, and what Wallington wrote and kept for manuscript circulation, they had the thrill of ushering into print. Sixty-one spiritual autobiographies were published in an anthology of *Spirituell Experiences of Sundry Beleevers* in 1651; over half of these were likely written by women. Thirty-eight more testimonies were published by the Independent John Rogers the same year, and a few years later, Samuel Petto's *Roses from Sharon or Sweet Experiences Gathered...[by] Precious Hearts* appeared. Men and women who had met in secret wanted to hear openly from one another, and

to share what the revolution had wrought, above all, in their spiritual lives. So they wrote of their journeys through the tumultuous decades of 1630s and 1640s, and recalled how they had found spiritual rest—a deliverance that corresponded with the creation of the Commonwealth.

The most well-wrought texts from these collections are declarations of conscientious sensitivity. One woman writes of being awakened to her pernicious habit of picking flowers on Sunday through a conversation with her six-year-old; another tells of her struggles with profanity and impatience; yet another confesses murderous thoughts towards her husband's drinking companion. One man writes of his fall into the snares of gambling and tobacco; another reports being conscience-stricken following a fight with a friend. It is hard to capture the ecstatic overtones of these collections, assembled for the first time as a whole. "I do heartily wish..." the editor John Rogers writes in the preface to his anthology, "that there may be no more Chamber-embodysings, but openly to all, for the conviction of many." Future "embodysings"—the assembly of distant members into a single collective—would be accomplished by means of the printed word. Rogers writes rhapsodically of the "soul-meltings" of a new era ushered in by the publication of these collections:

The times of assurance, are times of great change and alteration...[the believers] are watching and working...[These are] times of breathing after full possession...all this (and more too) will appear in the experiences of saints: O what stories can they tell! Even a new canticles! What jubiles! Love songs! And soule-raptures do they meet with! Then is *Aurora gaudii*, growing more and more to a perfect day!⁷¹

These were the radicals who betrayed no misgivings about the death of the king, enthusiastically celebrating even as many others were shaken by the hagiographic overtures of the *Eikon Basilike*. The following chapter will take a closer look at the affective tenor of conscientious tenderness in political discourse, and the considerably greater anxiety about regicide and revolution that arose from other less sensitive quarters.

* * *

For John Milton, the subject of my first chapter, the work of defining the tender conscience is so closely tied to arguments for the legitimacy of revolutionary activity that his oeuvre can be read as a protracted struggle to establish its boundaries. Against those who feared its anarchic potential, Milton championed the strength that tender consciences might lend to the English polity. In place of the Arthurian epic of English heroism he once envisioned, Milton imagines an epic in which all human history turns on a dietary restriction and a domestic dispute. The innocence of Eden had been conceived from antiquity onwards as a state of conscientious tranquility; Milton alone recounts Eve's scrupulous vulnerability—the guilty tears she sheds over a mere dream. In Milton's retelling, paradisaical perfection and strength are manifested in hypersensitivity to the slightest hint of sin. The "novelization" of epic that readers of *Paradise Lost* have long noted thus hinges not only on the scaling down of action, but more importantly, on the phenomenology of the tender conscience, whose perpetually sensitive attunement to world-historical minutiae shapes even Milton's imagistic strategies.

My second chapter reads Daniel Defoe's novels alongside the thought of John Locke. The tender conscience posited the public privilege of sensitivity; Locke's political theory preserves this role, and his philosophical writings further assert its epistemological reach. More wax than stone, Locke's *tabula rasa* proves pliable, as thought itself depends on the mind's vulnerability to impressions. Locke envisions a political subject constituted by receptivity, both

epistemological and conscientious, and believes with many contemporaries that conscience-bearing subjects must undergo the same “tenderizing” processes that constantly reshape Defoe’s characters. The inviolable rights of the Lockean subject are those of an endlessly impressionable conscience that requires the restrained use of power; Locke defends a right, in short, to the perpetual cultivation of receptivity, with all the vulnerability that entails. Defoe’s novels, like Locke’s *Essay*, answer to a pressing historical moment in which sensitivity necessarily supplies knowledge. When they neglect the painstaking cultivation of receptivity, Defoe’s characters lay themselves open to the Lockean charge of “stupidity” and endanger their souls at the very same time. Yet Defoe writes as dissenters are excluded from traditional centers of learning, and therefore unable to justify nonconformist belief and practice as socially-current knowledge. Without bearing any obvious signs of dissenting identity, Defoe’s protagonists nevertheless occupy a homologous place apart: they figure the experiential burden of Locke’s empiricism, struggling to assemble from the simple encounters of sense experience a comprehensive system of knowledge. As tender consciences in this sense, they register the staggering task of constructing a body of shared knowledge in the absence of full cultural inclusion.

A final chapter looks ahead to the participation of Samuel Richardson’s novels in the “heart religion” that animates tender consciences of the eighteenth century. The courtship plots of the novel have often been seen to render the (often female) reader’s political exclusion acceptable and even desirable. Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* gives voice to early readers who, far from warming to the novel’s conciliatory union, were troubled by the sudden prospect of lively, receptive authors within reputable households, ready at a moment’s notice to pen eloquent testimonies against their superiors. It was not without cause that Fielding tarred Pamela with the brush of Methodism, accusing her of reading, of all things, George Whitefield’s autobiography. The maid, Fielding suggests, contracts her very subjectivity by infection. Fielding may have been responding to what critics have only lately discovered: Richardson was the author of an early defense of the Methodist movement, soon to be the eighteenth century’s fastest-growing denomination. Richardson’s work, which makes the fainting delicacy of the domestic laborer wholly unremarkable, finds its counterpart in Wesley’s open-air ministry, which famously moved coal miners to tears—and to take up writing.

Forthcoming work will consider how Hume’s contagious sympathy and Smith’s impartial spectator revise and extend the tender conscience tradition up until our present moment. Twenty-first century debates over “safe spaces” and “snowflakes” suggest the urgency of a more expansive understanding of the vulnerability at the heart of liberalism and its fundamental, early modern recognition of fragility as the condition of political voice.

Introduction

¹ Consider the frenzied reception with which Richardson's heroine was met, especially in London: a suite of commercial products from wax-works to murals to fans leads one critic to think of Pamela alongside a "modern industrial product" like Superman. See James Grantham Turner, "Novel Panic: Picture and Performance in the Reception of Richardson's *Pamela*," *Representations* 48 (1994): 70-96.

² The definition which Ian Watt provides of formal realism is worth quoting in full: it is the implicit premise supposedly accepted by authors like Defoe and Richardson that "the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms"; see *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley, 1964), 32.

³ It was only three decades before Watt's study of the novel that L.C. Knights had taken aim at what he saw as a misguided fascination with character in his mockingly titled *How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?: An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespearean Criticism* (Cambridge, 1933). In 1952, it was still possible in the pages of *PMLA* for a critic interested in Defoe's character to ask without apparent irony—"How Smart Was Robinson Crusoe?" Crusoe possessed no "unusual mechanical ability," Harry F. Robins argued; his ordinary incompetence serves as a "perennial source of the book's charm" (*PMLA* 67, no. 5 [1952]: 782-789). The work of Hélène Cixous and Roland Barthes in the 1960s and '70s to "kill" the unitary character and the author, respectively, was set in motion by New Critics and Russian formalists impatient with the critical tendency to mistake characters for living beings. As Alex Woloch notes, "the decoupling of literary characters from their implied humanness [from the Russian formalists onward] becomes the price of entry into a theoretical perspective on characterization"; *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, 2003), 15-16. The whole trajectory of the present project suggests not only that it is possible to recouple the two, but that the history of the novel requires it.

⁴ Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 1987), 43.

⁵ John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1987), 11. For eighteenth-century studies, the year 1987 was something of an *annus mirabilis*: besides major publications from McKeon and Bender, it also produced Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford, 1987). Armstrong's account similarly describes a Foucauldian process of subject formation: the internalization of cultural scripts creates the very desires that authorize the apparently private and autonomous subject. Her concerns in this work are not primarily epistemological. Most recently, however, she has identified a "self-enclosed" modern subject associated once again with Locke; see Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York, 2005), 1.

⁶ Fielding notably resisted Richardson's disturbing innovation in his own works, pursuing the "comic epic poem in prose" in order to exclude himself from the novel tradition Watt identifies. Thus even Watt's striking claim about realistic nomenclature is strained in Fielding's case: Tom Jones is there, sure, but so too are Squire Allworthy and Mr. Thwackum.

⁷ Ann Banfield has recently read the modernist novel as a response to contemporary scientific developments (the advent of quantum physics, the particle theory of light, etc.) that further lifted knowledge from the realm of immediate observation; see *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* (Cambridge, 2006). This project's sense of the irreducible significance of subjective viewpoints and their place within objective constructions of reality owes something to the arguments of Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford, 1986).

⁸ The shock of Pamela isn't just that her fictional story makes it onto paper. Contemporaries expressed surprise that someone could think such thoughts at all. The proliferation of "it" narratives (most of which were published after *Pamela*) reflects the coming to life of another class of once-mute objects. Within the social arrangement that yokes the thinking, ordering mind of the mistress to the serviceable hands of the maidservant, it's not obvious that those hands would think or write. To suddenly see them do so—and with verve and eloquence!—is every bit as vivid a transformation as the prospect of a speaking coin. See Mark Blackwell, *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Lewisburg, 2007); Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago, 1998); and Jonathan Lamb, *The Things Things Say* (Princeton, 2011).

⁹ Among the latter, I am thinking of such recent works as Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010); Helen Thompson, *Fictional Matter: Empiricism, Corpuscles, and the Novel* (Philadelphia, 2017); and Courtney Weiss Smith, *Empiricist Devotions: Science, Religion and Poetry in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville, 2016).

¹⁰ The category of experience, as Peter Dear has argued, had to be reconceived during the seventeenth century for particular experiments to yield scientific knowledge; this project considers the related experimental sources of political and literary insight. Under an older Aristotelian framework, experience referred to that which was understood to happen everywhere (as in, the sun rises in the east). Neither the individual witness nor the event-based experience, from this understanding, offers much in the way of evidence; such subjective, specific encounters might yield knowledge of natural monstrosities without ever producing sensory data that might be generalized into universal principles. See Peter Dear, *Discipline and Experience: The Mathematical Way in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 1995), esp. chap. 1.

¹¹ Pamela offers an occasion for thinking about modes of perception apart from their disciplinary applications; she points up as no other eighteenth-century figure does the vast distance separating perceiver and panopticon.

¹² Quoted in Ann Banfield, "Describing the Unobserved: Events Grouped Around an Empty Centre," in *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments Between Literature and Language*, ed. Nigel Fabb, Derek Attridge, Alan Durant, and Colin MacCabe (London, 1988), 265-66.

¹³ See 1 Corinthians 8:7-12; I return to this Pauline conscience below.

¹⁴ See William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), 124-128 and Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006), 2.

¹⁵ Williams describes a "structured formation...at the very edge of semantic availability, [which] has many of the characteristics of a pre-formation, until specific articulations—new semantic xxii

figures—are discovered in material practice” (134). His emphasis on emergence into symbolic form is less relevant for my purposes. The tender conscience existed in material practice before it emerged as a politically significant formation. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 128-135.

¹⁶ Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca, 2010), especially chap. 1. See also C. D. Blanton, “Reoccupying Metaphor: On the Legitimacy of the Nonconceptual,” *Humanities* 4 (2015): 181–97.

¹⁷ This reading of moral biology and conscientious life might be assimilated to emerging biopolitical discourses that consider governmentality’s relation to “bare life”; I have not done so because I am not sure such approaches can accommodate the desire—especially the religiously motivated desire under discussion—for certain forms of authority. The term “moral biology” has been adapted from Alexandra Walsham, “Moral Biology: Hereditary Sin in Early Modern England” (plenary address, The Eleventh International Milton Symposium, University of Exeter, July 24, 2015). Walsham’s focus is the physical pathology (e.g. monstrous births, hereditary disease) that follows the Calvinist doctrine of original sin.

¹⁸ An evolution dating back to the very outset of the Reformation; see Michael Baylor’s landmark study, *Action and Person: Conscience in Late Scholasticism and the Young Luther* (Leiden, 1977). My debts to this work are obvious throughout. The broader process of sensitization traced here bears comparison to Abraham Stoll’s account of the “destructured” conscience; see “Thus Conscience: *Synderesis* and the Destructuring of Conscience in Reformation England” *Exemplaria* 24, nos. 1-2 (2012): 62-77.

¹⁹ The atomizing tendencies of Puritan devotion have often been contrasted with the communal spirit cultivated by corporeal performances of sacramental piety and common prayer; see Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago, 2001), especially chap. 1. My work offers one way to think about how the bodily logic in one strain of British “heart religion” unites subjects *through* individuation.

²⁰ Mark 9:43-44 (AV); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 21.9. Augustine clearly describes but does not name the *vermis conscientiae*. The phrase became well-known in the later medieval period through a twelfth-century work by Lotario dei Segni (later Pope Innocent III): “Omnes enim in pulvere dormient et vermes operient eos.... Vermis conscientie [*sic*] tripliciter lacerabit: affliget memoria, turbabit penitentia, torquebit angustia”; Lotharii Cardinalis, *De Miseria Humane Conditionis*, ed. Michele Maccarrone (Rome, 1955), (80-81).

²¹ Consider, for example, a devotional work of the early fourteenth century, which is entitled *Pricke of Conscience* but performs its pricking through an overview of doctrinal truths, from the general state of man’s wretchedness and the transience of earthly life to the pains of hell and joys of heaven. For those consigned to hell,

*þ*am sall *þ*e worme of conscience frete
Als withouten sall do vermin grete,
And swa sall *þ*ai evermare, withouten dout,
Be gnawen and byten within and without.

Richard Morris's Prick of Conscience, ed. Ralph Hanna and Sarah Wood (Oxford, 2013), ll. 7046-7049. To take just one more instance, the *Ayenbite of Inwyt, or Remorse of Conscience* of the mid-fourteenth century imagines in its very title the remorse, or "biting again," of conscience. Conscientious pain, however, does not constitute an obvious thematic element: the text treats each of the Seven Deadly Sins in turn, following eventually with a meditation on the Four Cardinal Virtues. But see also William Langland's *apologia*, where Conscience takes a more active role, joining with Reason to chide the dreamer; *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Exeter, 2008), C 5.1-117. My thanks to Spencer Strub for pointing me to Langland's text.

²² Paul Strohm suggestively portrays the reformed conscience as "indwelling" in *Conscience: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2011), 27.

²³ The scholastic tendency to view conscientious emotion as accidental is noted by Baylor, *Action and Person*, 37.

²⁴ Quoted in *The Works of Archbishop Whitgift*, 3 vols., ed. John Ayre (Cambridge, 1851, 53), 1:79.

²⁵ The most authoritative study of casuistry remains Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley, 1988), 140-142.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 250-258.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 154-155.

²⁸ I use the term "assent" here as it has been treated in Victoria Kahn's work. Kahn differentiates the tacit acceptance of assent (as to a statement of fact) from the active, and indeed, creative work of consent. See *Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640-1674* (Princeton, 2004), 18. I have chosen to credit casuists' stated commitments to a shared and ultimately intelligible ethical framework, but see the thoughtful investigations of other literary critics into casuistry's fraught mediation of competing political, ethical, and epistemological frameworks. Lowell Gallagher, *Medusa's Gaze: Casuistry and Conscience in the Renaissance* (Stanford, 1991), offers a deconstructive reading of casuistry that reveals its ambiguous relation to power. Though derived from a normative code, casuistry's interpretive resolutions expose the tensions, and in some sense, insufficiency of that originary code and its principles. The very silence in the code which admits of subversive interpretation can also, however, be exploited to extend the reach of authorities to peripheral or even quotidian matters. See also Meg Lota Brown, *Donne and the Politics of Conscience in Early Modern England* (Leiden, 1995); Camille Wells Slight, *The Casuistical Tradition in Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, and Milton* (Princeton, 1981); and G.A. Starr, *Defoe and Casuistry* (Princeton, 1971).

²⁹ Baylor, *Action and Person*, 47-52. To distance themselves from the Pelagian views with which it could be associated, Reformation theologians approached the *synderesis* with caution, often qualifying their invocations of it. Martin Luther rejected it altogether after 1519, and John Calvin never refers to it in his *Institutes*; see Robert A. Greene, "Synderesis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, no. 2 (1991), 195-219; Baylor, *Action and Person*, chap. 5.

³⁰ For another view of casuistry's procedures, see Jonsen and Toulmin, *Abuse of Casuistry*, 256. Because they emphasize casuistry's debts to a rhetorically-based Aristotelian ethic over and above the Platonic paradigm of geometric forms, the authors argue that casuistical arguments are accumulations of opinion rather than proofs that establish logical necessity. When compared to the Puritans' tender conscience, however, the shared commitment of Platonic and Aristotelian models to rational, discursive procedures should be noted.

³¹ Juan Azor, *Institutiones Morales*, 3 vols. (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1602-1612), 1:71-100.

³² The scale and severity of some of these pressures cannot be understated: Perez Zagorin has shown how casuistry and its strategies of mental reservation developed in part to protect Catholic recusants and others accused of heretical views; see his *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), chap. 9.

³³ Thus casuists recognize a number of jurisprudential positions (e.g. tutorism, probabiliorism, probabilism) that denote differing levels of stringency; Blaise Pascal's blistering accusations of laxity in the *Lettres Provinciales* become especially pertinent towards the far end of this spectrum.

³⁴ Reflecting on the pervasiveness of casuistry as a habit of thought, Keith Thomas goes so far as to name the seventeenth century the "Age of Conscience"; see "Cases of Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. John Morrill, Paul Slack, and Daniel Woolf (Oxford, 1993). I share Thomas' sense of conscience's significance to the age; the identification of conscience with casuistry in this period, however, has been unnecessarily restrictive.

³⁵ Jonsen and Toulmin, 161 (italics added). See also James F. Keenan, "Was William Perkins' *Whole Treatise of Cases of Conscience* Casuistry? Hermeneutics and British Practical Divinity," in *Contexts of Conscience in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*, ed. Harald E. Braun and Edward Vallance (New York, 2004), 17-31.

³⁶ William Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases thereof...* ([Leyden and London], 1639), [vi]. This English translation of Ames' *De Conscientia, et eius jure, vel casibus* ([Leiden?], 1630) became enormously influential; both works build on Ames' 1622 doctoral thesis.

³⁷ William Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience...also the Way to Get and Keepe Good Conscience* ([Cambridge]: John Legate for the University of Cambridge, 1596), 152-153.

³⁸ The movement identified here might be usefully understood as a development or intensification of the tensions that William Bouwsma described in "The Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought," in *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1990), 19-69.

³⁹ For a reading of the stony heart in another context, see Lara Bovilsky, "Shakespeare's Mineral Emotions," in *Renaissance Posthumanism*, ed. Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano (New York, 2016), 253-282. As in the Niobe myth, Bovilsky contends, mineral hardness can figure affective intensity.

⁴⁰ Samuel Clarke, *Medulla Theologiæ, or, The Marrow of Divinity...[in] Cases of Conscience...* (London, [1659]), 436.

⁴¹ Among the many works that discuss the melancholy repression produced by the Puritan conscience, see John Owen King III, *The Iron of Melancholy: Structures of Spiritual Conversion in America from the Puritan Conscience to Victorian Neurosis* (Middletown, 1983), chap. 1, and Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, 2004), chaps. 6-7.

⁴² Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), 776.

⁴³ Burton's diagnosis has gotten far more attention than his proposed remedies: a course of physic and a good reading list. By "hearing, reading of Scriptures, good Divines, good advice and conference [the overburdened conscience] must be corrected and counterpoised. Many excellent exhortations...are extant to this purpose.... Perkins, Greenham, Hayward, Bright, Hemingius, &c. are copious in this subject. Consult with them and such others"; see *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), 783. One of the most popular texts that Burton does not mention was reprinted in seven editions across five decades: Robert Linaker, *A Comfortable Treatise for the Reliefe of Such as are Afflicted in Conscience* (London, 1595). Other consolatory works include Richard Greenham, *A Most Sweete and Assured Comfort for All Those that are Afflicted in Conscience [sic], or Troubled in Minde* (London, 1595); John Freeman, *The Comforter: or A Comfortable Treatise...[with] Many Reasons Taken Out of the Word, to Assure...the Conscience that is Troubled* (London, 1600); William Cowper, *The Triumph of a Christian....Full of Sweet Consolations...Necessary for Those who are Troubled in Conscience* (London, 1608); and Richard Sibbes, *A Consolatory Letter to an Afflicted Conscience* (London, 1641).

⁴⁴ The classic accounts of this relationship are Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1947) and R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979).

⁴⁵ Robert Bolton, *Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences* (London, 1631), 328.

⁴⁶ Andrew Willet, *A Catholicon...Against the Pseudocatholike Religion* ([Cambridge], 1602), 144.

⁴⁷ Willet, *A Catholicon*, 144-145.

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1987), 1.150.

⁴⁹ For a related account of how the political rhetoric of intimacy corresponds to a new focus on maternal care in the household, see Rachel Trubowitz, *Nation and Nurture in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (Oxford, 2012), 5.

⁵⁰ Richard Alleine, *Vindiciae Pietatis* (London, 1663), 38.

⁵¹ [Richard Younge], *The Cure of Misprision* (London, 1646), 94.

⁵² The philosophical discourse of the following century will elide sight and sensitivity, as I argue in chapter two. John Locke's empirical scheme makes sensitivity the condition of epistemological privilege—a form of perceptual discernment.

⁵³ Samuel Rutherford, for example, explains that “a scrupulous conscience inclineth to the one side, but with doubting and a trouble of minde; as the traveller walketh, but with some pain, as if there were a little stone in his shoe”; see *A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience* (London, 1649), 21.

⁵⁴ Thomas Hooker, *The Application of Redemption by the ... Spirit of Christ, for the Bringing Home of Lost Sinners to God* (London, 1632), 77. *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) 3rd ed., s.v. “quick” (n. 1), def. 3a.

⁵⁵ John Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, in *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, rev. 2nd ed. (Harlow, 2007), lines 94, 96.

⁵⁶ Samuel Annesley, ed. *The Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate: or, Several Cases of Conscience* (London, 1661), 52.

⁵⁷ See Richard Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados...* (London, 1657): “One other Plant we have... is the Sensible plant, which closes the leavs upon any touch with your hand...and in a little time will open again” (99).

⁵⁸ See *OED*, “humble” (adj.), def. 2d.

⁵⁹ T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, (New York, 2009; originally published in 1957), 173. Eliot’s initial remarks on dissociation were made in a *Times Literary Supplement* review of a new anthology: *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler*, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford, 1921). His later, partial retraction was first given in a lecture to the British Academy in 1947.

⁶⁰ Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago, 1999), 7.

⁶¹ Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London, 2003), 29.

⁶² Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, N.C., 2011), 261.

⁶³ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 260.

⁶⁴ G. J. Barker-Benfield identifies the last third of the eighteenth century as the period when a nerve-based sensibility was designated as a characteristic of women, especially “properly acculturated” ones. And Kyla Schuller has recently noted how the concept of impressionability in the nineteenth century would be pressed via Lamarckian thought into long-term *impressibility*, the cross-generational adaptations (or “failures” to adapt) that justified racialized hierarchies of difference. See G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1996; first published 1992), 28; and Kyla Schuller, *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham, N.C., 2018).

⁶⁵ Nehemiah Wallington, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654: A Selection*, ed. David Booy (Farnham, UK, 2007), 31.

⁶⁶ Paul Seaver, *Wallington’s World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Redwood City, CA, 1985), 2.

⁶⁷ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 141-142.

⁶⁸ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 156.

⁶⁹ John Trapp, *A Brief Commentary or Exposition upon the Gospel According to St. John* (1646),
xxvii

⁷⁰ Nehemiah Rogers, *A Strange Vineyard in...to which God's Vineyard in this Our Land is Paralleld* (1623), 156.

⁷¹ John Rogers, ed., *Ohel, or Beth-Shemesh, A Tabernacle for the Sun* (London, 1653), 376-77.

CHAPTER ONE

Tears in Paradise: The Revolution of Tender Conscience

Early modern readers familiar with the Genesis account would have been surprised to find in the pristine, unfallen world of *Paradise Lost* something no literary antecedent had ever envisioned there before: guilty tears.¹ They are Eve's, and they follow a dream Satan insinuates by night before she has ever sinned. Eve's tears suggest her possession of what the seventeenth century recognized as a tender conscience—that hasty sensitivity to wrongdoing that stirs even in the absence of any sinful activity. It was no untroubled act of piety for John Milton, in 1667, to ensconce in the very heart of Paradise this exquisite sensitivity. For the tender conscience had grown, in the 1640s, into a shared political principle that provided the moral grounds for political resistance. This conscience, whose force crucially derived from its claims to weakness rather than strength, soon gained a reputation as the affective regime underwriting regicide. Critics in the wake of Charles I's death in 1649 denounced the violent proclivities of the discourse of “tenderness”; the credibility of conscientious discourse was thereby called into question. By the Restoration, neither the persistence nor divine provenance of the tender conscience could be safely assumed. The hasty sensitivity of the tender conscience at the close of the English Revolution seemed in need of an origin story, and one that would secure its future.

The first section of this chapter charts the rise of the tender conscience as a regulative public ideal. The conscience that remade Britain's political landscape did so by binding a complex set of experiences and assumptions—not least of all, the responsibility of ethical feeling—into a shared identity. The resulting discourse effectively lowered the threshold of ethical sensitivity even as it prescribed a restrained response to expressions of vulnerability.² English writers in the early decades of the seventeenth century had set out to cultivate an ideal of spiritual sensitivity; the emotional norms they created would carve the channels through which the more familiar political history flows.³ The successful challenge to episcopacy and the leadership of Archbishop Laud in the 1640s turned on the newfound authority of an affective discourse that motivated collective action across an ever-expanding range of cultural fields. With the finely attuned interdependence it posited and the comprehensive, systemic form it increasingly assumed across multiple domains of social life, the tender conscience enlarged into something like an affective ecology. Within its supple moral order, citizens gained political voices by becoming tender; a constitutional crisis ensued. In liberalism's formative age, the fragility of the tender conscience was both a regulative public ideal and the very condition of political voice.

Through this discourse, the cultural imagination becomes familiar with a body given over not to sensuous appetites but to sensitive perception. The century that sees both the Puritan struggle of flesh with spirit and the empiricist reliance on the senses becomes more comprehensible in light of a shared enthusiasm for morally valuable sensitivity.⁴ The following chapter considers the Enlightenment's subsequent adoption of sensitivity as an epistemological premise, a development made possible by the transformation of the tender conscience into a moving political force. Laudian episcopacy would succumb to the pressure of dissent; soon after, however, the united front of tender consciences fell apart. Sectarian groups began to vie with each other for the position of privileged delicacy, characterizing opposition from other parties as cruel violations. Thus seemingly liable to the claims of any and all parties, the conscience became the target of increasing suspicion. With the execution of Charles I, the tender conscience reached its high-water mark. Its credibility plummeted thereafter. At the Restoration, the survival

of the tender conscience—both as a privileged affective disposition and the spirit of the Good Old Cause—was very far from certain.

John Milton, as I argue at the close of this chapter, fully perceived the magnitude of this crisis, and undertakes in his poetry an audacious interpretation and defense of the tender conscience. The project of repairing its credibility grows ever larger for Milton until, in *Paradise Lost*, he reverse-engineers the whole universe to show the tender conscience woven into every part of the created fabric. Milton's epic mounts an unlikely defense of the tender conscience by suffusing it into the slightest bits of poetic matter, dispersing it altogether until readers participate in its restoration as a fundamental assumption that invites neither notice nor comment. This chapter discovers in the ephemera of Milton's images a forceful affirmation of the tender conscience's participation in history. The most monumental of English poems engages in the supremely delicate task of restoring to a nation its vision of a fragile, fading conscience. It is the tenderness of surpassing strength which characterizes both the celestial might and conscientious resilience that Milton, in defiance of Restoration sentiment, upholds for its capacity to reform entire worlds.

I. Swallowing Camels: Revolution and Regicide

The celebration of spiritual sensitivity emboldened citizens to enter public debate by declaring themselves tender consciences. Hewing as closely as it did to the experiential ideals of English practical divinity, the tender conscience was not seen as a particularly threatening innovation; yet the newfound popularity of the concept signaled a recuperation of its closest predecessor in the Pauline epistles, the "weak conscience." For Paul, the weak conscience names those believers hesitant to embrace Christian liberty in its fullest form. These individuals' scruples are unnecessary, but the community of believers is enjoined to offer respectful consideration, taking care to avoid offending, or becoming a stumbling block, to these weak consciences. During Elizabethan debates over further reformation, the weak conscience is most often invoked as a conservative principle of collective self-denial. When the Thirty-Nine Articles seek to restrain the zeal of Puritan reformers, they do so by requesting consideration for the "weak brethren" who might confuse the more limited rejection of traditional ritual with general impiety.⁵

Milton, among others, objects to this Elizabethan discourse of scandal and offense, arguing that it conjures up a shadowy group of weak consciences only when seeking to justify disputed action. In *Areopagitica*, he wonders whether such hapless laypeople exist at all. Given the types of protections foisted on them, Milton writes, these weak consciences would need to be a wildly unstable breed, given to an almost canine excitement for new scents and ideas—"an unprincip'l'd, unedify'd, & laick rabble, as that the whiffe of every new pamphlet should stagger them out of their catechism."⁶ Through the ministrations of practical divinity, this nameless, faceless rabble acquires another identity, and one worth proclaiming in the 1640s. The stigma of ignorance and impiety that followed the weak conscience would disappear behind the tender conscience, which joins the former's vulnerability to the living faith of Protestants. As this newly privileged, sensitive conscience authorizes public speech, it crucially carries forward the community-wide scope of the former term, complete with its expectation of special consideration for vulnerable members. The exercise of political authority itself comes to be assessed through this tender discourse, with its language of affective intimacy and somatic pain.

Throughout the Civil War, the tender conscience carries a non-partisan tone inasmuch as all disputants identify with its spiritual vivacity. But its explicitly political charge first emerges

during the Prayer Book controversy, as Scottish Presbyterians resisted the crown's push for liturgical conformity. "We are borne downe with will and authority," the Westminster divine George Gillespie protested in 1637—then an unknown minister.⁷ His pamphlet, published anonymously, was sensational enough to be burned by Scottish authorities. In it, he insisted that "*tender consciences must be tendered, rather then [sic]...racked by auctority*" (*Dispute*, 11). The authorities, he alleged, have inflicted punishments that can be understood only as tenderness through an etymological perversion—they have "racked," as the Latin verb *tendere* implies, torturously extended and stretched the people, where they should have "tendered" them by providing affectionate care. This complaint was echoed by William Prynne, a man uniquely qualified to denounce cruel punishment. Significantly, though, he writes in 1641 not of his own cause célèbre but a more widely-shared discomfort:⁸

An arbitrary government in the Church is more dangerous, more grievous than that in the state; this is exercised upon men[']s] consciences the most tender parts, and is the very pinnacle of tyranny, and of all other most intollerable; that blow which will hardly be felt by the arme, will put out the eye.⁹

What Prynne leaves aside speaks volumes: against the searing injuries done to the eye-conscience, his own facial mutilation hardly bears mentioning.

When the Elizabethan Puritan Cartwright had described the conscience of clear conviction, the reader will recall the distinction he drew between body and conscience: the body can be imprisoned and subject to torment; the conscience and its judgments (at once scriptural and rational) cannot be compromised. This position, boldly declared from the stake by Foxe's protagonists, remains available to Prynne. But the conscience for Gillespie and Prynne has seemingly lost its autonomy; a long course of metaphorical representation casting it as bruised reed and sensitive eye has made it co-extensive with the whole corporeal being. Gillespie's characterization of conscientious violation as physical attack represents much more than a figurative shift. From this framework of understanding, Gillespie and Prynne will no longer advise, as Cartwright does, Christian fortitude in the face of opposition. The depiction of unbearable, this-worldly pain foregrounds instead the upper limits to which the body can be subjected.

The growing anti-prelatical movement found in the tender conscience a theory of individual resistance that readily scaled upwards, for it made dissent a matter of spiritual self-preservation. A full decade before, Charles I had sensed the oncoming threat and rushed to assert his prerogative over the conscience: at his behest, Matthew Wren and other leading clerics delivered what have been called the "Forced Loan" sermons of 1627.¹⁰ They defended the king's fiscal policy and personal rule by urging a unitary conscience that deferred casuistical questions to the state. In Wren's divine right version of this argument, God himself "sets but one rule of Conscience for the feare of...both [God and king]." For those of the king's subjects who had taken on themselves the daily care of their consciences, however, a field of conscientious inquiry had opened up—a field of such breadth and depth that it rendered nonsensical the crown's juridical claims to it. Wren, who would go on to become a bishop, directly addresses the challenge posed by laymen who made it their life's work to tend their consciences, dismissing them as "great professors"—those who profess the faith without practicing it:

Many of the Great Professors of this religion, they that take upon themselves above others...to have the best Consciences by far...stumble and...not onely stand in great suspense, but dispute it also fiercely, whether [the *King*]...can of Right be invested with so Divine a Priviledge [as to lay down the rule of conscience]. (*A Sermon*, [1627], 33; quoted in Perille)

Wren perceptively diagnoses the rise of a peculiar, mutually-reinforcing partnership between contentiousness and uncertainty. Peter Heylyn, the most indefatigable defender of the Laudian regime, warned against this increasingly vocal scrupulosity:

[C]ertainly this plea of conscience, is the most dangerous buckler against authoritie, which in these latter ages hath beene taken up. So dangerous that were the plea allowed,...there were a present end of all obedience. (*A Briefe and Moderate Answer*, 31)

Heylyn's ominous and rather desperate warning would come too late. By 1637, conscientious tenderness had already become indistinguishable from the lively, vigorous faith that Protestants variously accepted or aspired to as their own.

The unimpeachable repute of this shared spiritual identity provided the authority needed to voice dissent; its success made even opponents speak in its terms. By 1641, when one "learned divine" hesitated over the Parliament's circulation of the Protestation, "not daring to thinke a disloyall thought...against the Lord's anointed," he resorted to the discourse most acceptable to its advocates, cautiously titling his work *Certaine Queries of Some Tender Conscienced Christians* (10). For most of the early 1640s, though, the term resounds as a denunciation of Laudian policies. "The greatest and chiefest Authors of our miseris," one minister announced before Parliament, "is the Bishops and their adherents...[who have inflicted] punishment upon those of tender Consciences."¹¹ Before the House of Commons in 1640, Lord George Digby would balk at the Root and Branch petition, but readily decry prelatical cruelty:

Was there a man of pretty sturdy conscience, that would not blanch for a little? Their [the prelates'] pernicious [canonical] Oath hath made him sensible, and wounded, or I feare, prepared him for the Divell....Was there a man of nice and tender conscience? Him they have afflicted with scandal in Adiphoris, imposing on him those things, as necessary, which hee thinks unlawfull, [which] they themselves [know] to be but indifferent.¹²

By wresting from the conscience assent to oaths and liturgical practices, the prelates, Digby maintains, unduly wounded both the sturdier and more tender varieties of the healthy conscience.

The preeminent pamphleteer during the rise of the Long Parliament, Henry Parker, similarly took bishops to task for "the suppression of those which are enemies to their pride, avarice, and ambition," accusing them of "sanctifying the Altar, and unsanctifying the Lords day,...advancing auricular confession...and crying downe lecturing, and preaching."¹³ Parker further maintains, in keeping with Gillespie's position, that Laudian innovations inflict irreparable injuries—to tender consciences, the body of believers, and the body politic alike:

These new Doctrines...serve to terrifie and scandalize tender consciences, and thereby to deprive, and silence many painfull good Ministers, and to scare away into forreigne

Plantations, whole troupes of Laymen, and to enwrap the rest in opposition... (*A Discourse*, 14)

Parker charges the bishops with subjecting the most conscientious pastors—that is, those who take pains with their parishioners—to pain. As they send whole “troups of Laymen” into panicked flight, they have effectively chosen to wage war with England herself.

It is bad policy, Parker argues, to deplete the ranks of potential soldiers by antagonizing them; his glancing reference to military order, however, is at odds with his depiction of terrified refugee-troops. Citizens of London in the early 1640s noted the strikingly coordinated movement of tender consciences: their mobilization would have recalled that of armed units if not for their protestations of vulnerability. In 1640, the Root and Branch petition seeking the total eradication of episcopacy had been signed by 15,000 and presented to the House of Commons by 1,500 signatories. After a shocking breach in early 1642, when the king impeached and sought the arrest of five members of Parliament, more petitions were delivered. Those from Kent and Sussex were carried north across the London Bridge and towards Westminster. As Wallington observed, these men were unexpectedly armed; one might say they wore their grievances on their sleeves. The “Kentish men I did see myself come up Fish Street Hill,” Wallington wrote with no little excitement, “many hundreds of them on horseback with their protestations sticking in their hats and girdles” (quoted in Seaver 151). Within days, another group of petitioners from Sussex retraced this same path, coming within yards of Wallington’s home, where he estimated 3,000 men in all.

Petitions like these were presented to Parliament as the tearful pleas of an entire nation. In 1641, John Pym, one of the Five Members whom Charles I would seek to arrest, called for sympathy as he introduced petitions from London and neighboring counties:

In these foure Petitions you may heare the voice, or rather the cry of all *England*, and you cannot wonder if the urgencie, the extremity of the condition wherein we are, doe produce some earnestnesse and vehemencie of expression more then ordinary; the agony, terror, and perplexity in which the Kingdome labours, is universall, all parts are affected with it; and therefore in these, you may observe the groans and miserable complaints of all...No grievances are sharper then those that presse upon the tender consciences of men... (*A Declaration*, 34-35)

Pamphleteers took bishops to task for failing to learn, as they themselves had, the lessons of England’s most famous divines. “Why is it,” one anonymous pamphlet asked, “that no end will be put to the misery of such who are men of tender conscience, and doe desire, God knows, to live in peace...?”¹⁴ Consolatory works are turned into exhortations directed against the “indiscreet pastors” now commonly referred to as prelates. The most damaging allegations of ‘popish innovations’ are hardly necessary when pamphleteers can point out that prelates do not act as tender shepherds. As one author urges in a work decrying “unjust oppressours”:

Get a tender, and compassionate love of thy brother in thy heart...Let the love of Christ...be thy patterne: he would not breake a bruised Reed...He fed his flock like a sheeheard [sic]: hee gathered the Lambes with his arme and carried them in his bosome....”¹⁵

Through their wide circulation, the comforting counsels written for troubled consciences are applied well beyond the pastoral context for which they were developed. They came to establish an ideal emotional dynamic against which other hierarchical relationships would be tested.

Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Quakers—all found recourse through the language of tender conscience, and more importantly, *as* tender consciences, to urge the restraint of episcopal power. In their emergence into the public sphere, they do not primarily identify as reformers, urging ecclesiastical overhaul, or Puritans, pitting holiness against carnal corruption. Instead, as “tender consciences,” they claim that existing laws provoke near-physical pain that must be attended to, even by political caretakers who feel none themselves.¹⁶ The term is eirenic insofar as it allows for relatively minor distinctions between all parties involved. Even those who abide by Laudian policies have consciences—just hardier ones. But the notion becomes threatening, too, as its capaciousness draws dissenting factions together into an indefinitely defensive stance against any and all measures from unfeeling authorities.

The pamphlet warfare of these anti-prelatical writers helped unseat Archbishop Laud and abolish episcopacy. But as Presbyterians like William Prynne seemed poised to rebuild an ecclesiastical order, they were met with a surge of opposition from Independents and others who had once formed the anti-episcopal front alongside them. Independent writers denounced the hierarchical structure of Presbyterian polity and its enforcement by civil power with the same arguments that had brought down the prelates. In one delightful description, the authors of *The Ancient Bounds* insist that Presbyterian expectations for uniformity in worship cause hardship to the “scabby or itchy children” among them.¹⁷ Unlike easily misled, weak consciences, these children do not lack spiritual understanding. Their tenderness resembles a mild case of physical difference—a condition of enhanced sensitivity requiring special consideration. To allow public magistrates to enforce orthodoxy, this work reminds its readers, is to ignore the Christ that tender consciences had been led to embrace:

Consider likewise, what a misrepresenting of Christ the King of the Church this compulsion is...and in what a distance...it runs from those sweet and soft prophecies of him; *Behold thy King coming, meek and lowly, riding upon an asse, the most bearing and forbearing creature...He shall not ... make his voice to be heard in the streets; A bruised reed shall he not break; Butter and honey shall he eat.*¹⁸

The authors of *The Ancient Bounds* have been credited with what W.K. Jordan calls “one of the half dozen most important contributions ever made to the development of the theory of religious toleration in England.”¹⁹ They are also, however, remarkable theorists of affective political theology. As they wax lyrical at the very mention of Christ’s good governance (“sweet and soft,” “bearing and forbearing”), their rhyme and alliteration—and the responsiveness of word to word that each entails—conjure up the aesthetic and affective harmony of the just ecclesiastical polity. There is a place for monarchical power within this polity. But as contemporary readers would hardly have failed to note, the portrayal of one “meek and lowly” king provides a barely disguised critique of another who had lately taken up arms against his own subjects.

The most vocal of the Presbyterians, Thomas Edwards, did not find sweet and soft words appropriate to a situation of crisis. In his *Gangraena*, a vast report of spiritual anarchy stretching across hundreds of pages in three volumes, Edwards details the scurrilous beliefs and practices of sectarian groups. Amid the more sensational reports, Edwards’ ire at one relatively tame pamphlet, *Tender Conscience Religiously Affected* (1646), stands out. He returns more than once

to this piece, which includes an engraving of three figures beneath a winged heart, clearly marked as the tender conscience (Figure 1). In an unlikely performance of ekphrasis, Edwards recreates the image he so despises by attending to every detail:

Under the heart, with daggers at it, stands the Pope, the Prelate, and the Presbyter in the midst of them two, with a book in his hand, where *Directorie* is written, Antichristian Presbyter written [next to] him, and the Crown under his foot, he treading upon it, and a dagger in his hand, reaching at the heart of the conscience, but a chaine with a weight hanging at his arm, whereby he falls somewhat short of pricking tender conscience with his dagger. (*Gangraena*, 130).

The Pope and Prelate, with their longer swords, have pierced the conscience. The Presbyter, as the eagle-eyed Edwards observes, just barely misses it. Pamphlets featuring the image had been strategically placed on church doors around London. When Parliament ordered city churches to nominate elders for vetting by a committee of “Triers,” the broadsides announcing this new process had been replaced overnight by a “scandalous paper” with this image (*Third Part of Gangraena*, 222-23). The Independents’ graphic disavowal of one-time comrades, Edwards protests, itself evinces a lack of tenderness:

the tenderness, forbearance, love, indulgence, of the Presbyterians, when they were in their highest power, and the Independents weak and low, is known to all this Kingdome; and had they been such men as the Independent Painter would make them, the Sectarie had never growne to this boldness to make such a Picture;...the truth of it is, a Sectarie may well be painted with a dagger thus running at the heart of the Presbyterians tender consciences... (*Gangraena*, 132)

For all his hard-charging rhetoric, the Presbyterian is caught off guard by the nature of this accusation; Edwards writes as one surprised by his own pain, and nearly ventures to say that the bleeding heart of the picture is his own.

Winged hearts, as Edwards’ readers may have recognized, recalled continental emblem books adapted from Renaissance precursors; more specifically, the heart that found its way onto London’s church doors is indebted to the *Schola Cordis* (1635), a meditational work by the Dutch Benedictine Benedictus van Haefden (Figures 2-4). In the Renaissance humanist tradition that follows Alciati’s 1531 example, word and image are paired together directly, with epigrams explaining often mysterious iconography. A more recent development touched off by the massive popularity of the Jesuit Herman Hugo’s *Pia Desideria* (1624) employs images instead as guides to meditation. Each engraving pairs with a longer devotional passage, and the volume as a whole follows a tripartite structure of spiritual progression.²⁰ This is the tradition within which the Dutch writer works, and the one to which the English engraver responds.²¹ The meditational structure so central to the devotional works disappears in this English transposition into an arresting occasional image, expressly created to address the political crisis of 1646.

One London pamphlet featuring the scandalous engraving conspicuously places it before the text, in keeping with the sequence of van Haefden’s guide. Instead of following with prose meditations, however, the English pamphleteer proceeds into a series of questions and answers about Presbyterian positions on a range of topics, from tithes and the Book of Common Prayer to the ordination of ministers and the language of public worship. The inquiring conscience refuses to be guided into devotion by either image or book, turning instead to a modified form of

casuistry. The genre that directs attention, inadvertently or not, to areas of disputed practice is retained even as it is unmoored from ecclesiastical authority.²² Within the engraving, as Edwards notes, the Presbyterian leader brandishes a dagger in one hand and the *Directory for Public Worship* in the other. Though the conscience's disembodied substance appears more refined than that of the heavily cloaked figures beneath, it remains relatively earthbound, denied the higher spiritual ascent of its emblem book counterpart (see Figure 3). The viewer must imagine the conscience to be a peculiarly tender substance (that indeterminate condition which Milton, as we will see, figures more memorably than anyone else)—at once ethereal enough to fly and material enough to be run through with metal blades.

The iron tether that restrains the Presbyterian from piercing the conscience passes beneath his manual for worship: the book is, as the lectern Bibles of an earlier era and the Presbyterian himself, still held down by chains. Not so the tender conscience, the only figure who goes without a devotional guidebook. (The prelate clutches a liturgical volume and the pope a missal). When provoked by devilish engines, the hearts of emblem books spout viols and vermin, the apparent symbols of vanity and vice; this tender conscience spouts poetry. This conscience does not need a book, for its receptivity has allowed it to so fully absorb the written word that scripture entwines with the heart's own emanations to yield a kind of inspired doggerel.

As Edwards recognizes, perhaps belatedly, the pamphlet wars of the English Revolution could not be won without the aesthetics of the tender conscience. Within a work that has been described as “frenzied polemic,” Edwards all but acknowledges that neither his rebarbative tone nor more moderate arguments could rival the single standard of the tender conscience, which continuously drew people out of the Presbyterian ranks.²³

The Independents and Sectaries cry up themselves and their way as a purer, holier way than other mens, making themselves the only Saints, the Paradise of God, the tender conscienced men, thereupon separating from our Churches, and accounting the Presbyterians as a dunghil; which kinde of notions among the people, crying the Saints, the Saints, tender consciences hath gained them more then all their Arguments. . .²⁴

The distance of the tender conscience from both its errant, weak associate and its stalwart, rational counterpart is nowhere more apparent than here. The Paradise of God itself—and here one thinks of Milton's Paradise—is realized through the unity of tender consciences. Sturdier Presbyterian consciences, apparently hardened by proximity to power, meet in the dunghill. By Edwards' admission, the battle for public opinion turns less on the structure of ecclesiastical polity than a desire to possess the affective and ethical authority of a conscience that claimed, at least for the time, to be more familiar with pain than power.

Insofar as the tender conscience does not lend itself to pictorial representation, the engraver's stylized emblem models the theological principle of accommodation: spiritual entities that exceed representation—usually, God himself—assume inferior forms fitted to human apprehension. This mediation, sometimes called condescension, inevitably involves loss; divine glory itself diminishes, crammed into the crevices of corporeal form. By interposing the iconographic or linguistic veil that at once gestures to and denies referential equivalence, allegory supplies the aesthetic mode of this descent. Within the broadside, this descent takes an inadvertently comic turn. The soft susceptibility of the conscience is completely lost in heavy-handed strokes imparting what C.S. Lewis elsewhere describes as “harsh woodcut energy”; the formal incongruity underscores a functional one.²⁵ Once an innocuously devotional centerpiece, the conscience inserts itself where it has never before been represented, above political actors on

a historical plane. From within this threatening new field of representation, the emblematic conscience cries out, as it were, for a more suitable medium; as its eruption into verse suggests, that medium is language.



Figure 1.
 "Tender Conscience Religiously Affected." Engraving from
Severall Votes of Tender Conscience (London, 1646).
 Courtesy of the British Library, London.



Figure 2.
 "Apertio Cordis." Engraving by Boetius à
 Bolswert. From Benedictus van Haeften,
Schola Cordis (Antwerp, 1635), 591.
 Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



Figure 3.
 "Cordis Volatus." Engraving by Boetius à
 Bolswert. From Benedictus van Haeften,
Schola Cordis (Antwerp, 1635), 470.
 Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



Figure 4.
 "Cordis Vanitas." Engraving by Boetius à
 Bolswert. From Benedictus van Haeften,
Schola Cordis (Antwerp, 1635), 96.
 Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



Figure 5.
 Devil with bellows inflaming heart. From
 Daniel Cramer, *Emblemata Sacra*
 (Frankfurt, 1624), 197. Courtesy of the
 University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Readers of Milton's epic have long been concerned with the vertical, theological accommodation by which the poet tells of "things invisible to mortal sight"; Milton and his contemporaries, however, were also concerned with what they took to be the horizontal, political principle of accommodation. Milton's epic fuses the two within the circumambient world of Paradise; the synchronous relations of the Edenic pair, as I will argue below, answer to shifting cues from the encircling garden. But in the pamphlet wars, conscientious subjects had rejected calls for submission by advocating accommodation, or mutual compliance, on uncertain matters. One could decide, swiftly and arbitrarily, with a show of force, or one might unbind casuistical knots more carefully by seeking judicious legal settlements. As the author (probably Parker) goes on to argue, however,

there is a middle way (which we call Accommodation)...[T]hat is commonly when to avoid the mischief of the Sword, and the uncertaine intricacie of Judgement, both parties by mutuall agreement condescend equally to depart from the rigor of their demands on either side, and so comply, accommodate, and meet together upon termes as equall as may be. Whersoever then the word *Accommodation* is pressed, (as it is now with us in the *London* Petition, for the word *Submission* is not at all used) 'tis most absurd and contradictory to exclude a yeelding and compliance of both sides....²⁶

The condescension to which Parker alludes extends the vertical declension from the most sublime demands for justice; it is the horizontal suffusion of grace whereby parties palliate the full rigor of just and reasonable demands—a compliant being-in-the-world that responds to forces above as well as below. Unlike the submissive subject, the accommodating collective strives to yield on the grounds of mutual compliance, bending even in the absence of complete equality. Without either presuming the Habermasian dialogue of equals or the hierarchical *gemeinschaft*, the members of this collective gently wear each other down on "termes as equall as may be."

With the levelling of church hierarchy, English citizens suddenly faced questions about what political and ecclesiastical unity should look like and how quickly it could be established. For Presbyterians, accommodation retained its appeal as a means of articulating, against mere toleration, a vision of unity in practice subsuming differences in principle. Gillespie pleaded with one-time allies: "I had rather goe two miles in an *Accommodation*," he wrote, "then one mile in a *Toleration*;*For one way, not for two*. Let there be no strife between us and you, *for we be brethren*..." Gillespie admitted that the formal structure of accommodation was still something of a mystery, conceding that a "tolerable Toleration" might be needed if compromise proved impossible. But accommodation, he argued, was better in part because it was a collective pursuit; its uncertain execution suggested that, like faith itself, it needed to be "worked out" as a progressive revelation.²⁷

But the Accommodation is a more excellent way, and that which is to be rather embraced, yea endeavoured for and followed after, according to the Apostles rule, *Phil.* 3. 15....*Let us therefore as many be perfect be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveale even this unto you.*²⁸

Uncertainty is no less than divine; this open-ended promise anticipates the political principles (or lack thereof) of the Commonwealth in the 1650s. For all the popular conceptions of its theocratic

rule, this period was marked by an extreme indecisiveness that historians have characterized in the terms of disability and illness: Cromwell suffered from “ideological schizophrenia,” and the Rump Parliament, from “ideological lameness.”²⁹ For the new dissent in 1644, however, such a proposal proved unacceptable, not least of all because of the temporal disruption it implied—its postponement of a conscientious “now” for “not yet.”

The physiological metaphors that lately sensitized the conscience had, after all, ushered in a dual and increasingly split temporality: there is the “not yet” of the slow, imperceptible growth of irritable tissue, the lifetime cultivation in which the diarist’s conscience can never be wholly inured to pain. But there is also, and most conspicuously in the 1640s, the all-important instant, the twinkling “now” of the blink, the wince, and the flinch. Having cultivated for so long its reflexive responses—the flickering readiness of a conscientious “now,” primed to the practice of what a later idiom would call “writing to the moment”—the tender conscience could not, in this instance, be made to wait. Milton, as the next section will show, declares his resistance to Presbyterianism through the compressed, coiled-spring form of the sonnet (his formal insistence on “now”); his prose defense of divorce correspondingly recalibrates marital time.

II. Making Men Cry: *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and “Soule Rape”

As the Commonwealth’s chief diplomatic correspondent in the 1650s, Milton wrote on behalf of the new republic, its leading literary and political representative against a hostile Europe. When he issued a *Second Defence of the English People* (1654), Milton had a two-front battle on his hands, defending the English Revolution as well as his own person. The poet had recently gone totally blind, and critics at home and on the continent were seizing on his loss of vision as a mark of divine disfavor—his due penalty for aiding a regicidal state. Milton is thus driven in the *Second Defence* to set forth his unassailable credentials. Across a lifetime of public service, he reminds readers, he has labored for the cause of liberty in three contiguous fields, from the ecclesiastical to the “domestic or personal” and the civil (*CPW* 4:624). The arc of his career thus unfolds across a trilogy that includes *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (1641), his call for ecclesiastical liberty, and *Areopagitica* (1644), his defense of civil liberty. Within this scheme, his work on behalf of the “domestic or personal”—his defense of divorce—emerges as the central but perhaps most controversial contribution to the cause of liberty.

Milton’s retrospective look makes visible the coherence of his corpus, but it does so by minimizing his participation in the culture of conscience. Writing to European critics in the 1650s, Milton was well aware that he addressed an audience disgusted, as we shall see, by the bloody conscience; in his defenses, Milton adopts the less inflammatory, more cosmopolitan language of liberty. But the situation looked different in the early 1640s when Milton had yet to become a household name, at least not as a poet to those outside a coterie of manuscript readers. By the end of 1643, Milton had not even published his first volume of poetry: he had anonymously put out a court masque, left his initials next to *Lycidas*, and most recently, contributed his astonishing talents to the pamphlet wars. For someone with an eye on literary fame and not notoriety, his next move looks like a blunder. With the anti-prelatical coalition falling apart, the relatively unknown author prints a defense of divorce, then pens not one but four answers (including a sonnet) to horrified critics. By all accounts, Milton did not anticipate the severity of the backlash. One of the printers of the second edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1644), Gregory Dexter, was completely ruined when his press and printing tools were confiscated; he subsequently fled to the colony of Providence.³⁰ Milton’s

timeless defense of the press in *Areopagitica* was fueled in part by this assault on his collaborator.

It is surely of interest to scholars of the novel, that most domestically-oriented of literary genres, that the epic poet of the preceding age stepped into the public eye by intervening so intensely in domestic affairs. Never one to confine his thoughts within the bounds of public consensus, Milton was nonetheless taken aback by the public response to his divorce tracts; if he had not expected instant approval, he had not anticipated violent hostility. His misreading of the moment owes to his exceptional grasp of the tender conscience's role in advancing the unprecedented events of the 1640s: having intuited its force and furthest implications, he recognized it, somewhat proleptically, as an ideal whose time had come. "To immure and shut up [an unhappily married couple] together..." Milton declares, "is not a course that Christian wisdom and tenderness ought to use" (*CPW* 2:324). He appeals to compassionate readers by urging them to show "some conscionable, and tender pity...[to] those who have unwarily...made themselves the bondmen of a luckless and helpless matrimony" (*CPW* 2:240).

Milton goes on to cultivate the disposition to pain with which readers have become familiar. To make good on his promise to "wipe away ten thousand tears out of the life of man," Milton must first persuade him to cry, and to interpret these tears as confirmation of strength and spiritual vitality (*CPW* 2:245). Through a process that mimics the stages of evangelical bruising, the tract prods married men to confess, in this case, not their sins but their sorrows. When the text takes a sharply figurative turn to depict the Virgilian image of Mezentius' cruelty, it's a move calculated to provoke discomfort. The scriptural unity of "one flesh," in which Eve melts back, as it were, into Adam's side, putrefies instead into "two carcasses chain'd unnaturally together... a living soule bound to a dead corps" (*CPW* 2:326-27). This macabre version of the marriage liturgy's "'til death do us part" pledge averts the gaze from the deathbed parting to imminent danger: the injudicious yoke hastens death. The lonely husband, grown numb to disappointment, must be made to feel the lethal consequences of intimate discord.

The scriptural exegesis which critics have noted thus plays only one part in a pamphlet which tasks itself with putting the sting back into a bad marriage. Adopting the position of spiritual counselor, the text ventures still further to diagnose for readers their own inexplicable feelings. The viselike grip of the nuptial bond can so oppress that

though [a troubled husband] be almost the strongest Christian, he will be ready to despair in virtue....[T]his doubtless is the reason of those lapses and that melancholy despair which we see in many wedded persons, though they understand it not, or pretend other causes... (*CPW* 2:254)

Vulnerability had attained such esteemed status that, in Milton's anatomy of melancholy, the husband must be held up as weaker than the partner long presumed to be so. One anonymous response helps to gauge just how strange this vulnerable figure appeared within the context of marriage. Among the objections to divorce presented in *A Plea For Ladies and Gentlewomen* is the economically precarious position in which it leaves the female partner. If vulnerable men could dissolve marriages at will, its concerned author asks,

Who should keep the children of these divorcers which sometimes they would leave in their Wives bellies? How shall they come by their Portions, of whom, or where? and how shall the Wife be endowed of her Husbands estates?³¹

Though Milton might insist that his conception of divorce—driven by the male partner but mutually satisfactory—has been poorly understood, the nameless critic rightly grasps the diminution of the husband’s obligations and his neglect of conventional, female figures of vulnerability. Milton’s tract refuses to cast the husband as a benevolent protector, dignifying the ostensible breadwinner instead with a newfound neediness. Against concerns over licentiousness and gender roles (the author of *A Plea* worries that all this talk of vulnerability will encourage “effeminate and childish divorces”), the poet privileges the needs of the sensitive saint.³² As Milton argued, existing measures did little to guard against libertine tendencies; they had effectively, however, kept tender consciences from forming more perfect unions.

Through this defense of separation for unity’s sake, Milton begins to develop one of his most enduring fictions. His vision of a companionate marriage of like minds, introduced in the divorce tracts and carried into the heart of Paradise, would transform conceptions of the ideal partner and love itself.³³ Discussions of marriage in the period’s domestic manuals typically understood it as a reflection of Christ’s love for the church: Christ, the suffering servant, provided a supreme example of love as a condition of being and an infinite effluence. “The cause of Christ’s love was his love,” one popular manual explained, further noting that

his love arose only, and wholly from himselfe, and was every way free.... In imitation thereof husbands should love their wives, though there were nothing in wives to move them so to do, but only that they are their wives.... True love hath respect to the *object* which is loved, and the good it may doe thereunto, rather than to the *subject* which loveth, and the good it may receive. For love *seeketh not her owne*.³⁴

The mysterious, *ex nihilo* creation of kinship where none had existed made marriage the image of salvation; the sheer fiat of espousal, conjoining for life on the consent of a moment, was a miracle surpassed only by the reconciliation of God and man. The miraculous forging of kinship, in election as in marriage, established a structure of relations whose overriding significance rendered internal fluctuations trivial. Thus William Gouge’s manual presses on in its counsel to dissatisfied husbands testing the waters of separation: even when partners exhibited “peevishnesse, stoutnesse, insolencie, and other like intolerable vices,” Gouge maintained, the immutable structure of the marriage bond called for love’s inexhaustible effusion.³⁵

But this structure no longer looked the same after the tender conscience, which had developed out of precisely the premise that the transcendent status of the spiritual bond was most honored through attending to its mundane, minute fluctuations. This change in focus did not just hinge on doubts about election; it reflects a more general descent of the overarching structure of reconciliation into its maintenance within conscientious time. Neither distributed throughout the order of social life nor exalted as the endpoint of individual election, this bond was made legible, or better yet, “scriptable,” as an ongoing construction that could be strengthened beyond its primary instantiation. Since the intimacy of this bond, as a matter of degrees, could be lessened or intensified at any moment, the believer tended to it constantly, checking in to mend even the slightest breaches. If the conscience develops in this period into the center of consciousness, as Timothy Harrison argues, it comes no less importantly to serve as a second self and bosom friend—the virtuous double of the “conspirator” who literally breathes (“respires”) and knows alongside oneself. It would not be long before the intimate concert of this relationship redefined the marital one. It was not enough for spouses to be conjoined through spiritual fiat, not even if they awoke, “imparadised in one another’s arms”; each needed to improve on the unity that

structure afforded, and to decide how that unity should be manifest from day to day. (Thus that first pair in *Paradise* must ask with those outside it—how does “one flesh” work in practice? Do we really, Milton’s Eve wonders, need to be joined at the rib all the time?) The daily ministrations that could, from one perspective, merely “sweeten” marital ties came to make or break the bond itself.

Thus precipitated by the conscience, the period’s inquiry into the nature of unity and its temporal order would extend from the halls of Parliament to the home. In many ways, the telescoping effect of the conscience—its ability to bring home what is at a million miles’ distance, and vice versa—made marriage a fitting site for thinking about unity on a much more expansive scale. Of course such far-flung connections were far from new; the correspondence of natural hierarchies was entirely commonplace, and one would be hard pressed to name a time when monarchs were not conceived of as fathers or husbands to the people. But the conscience’s appeal to somatic intensities of pain led it to privilege physically intimate relationships as a primary locus for drawing out the consequences of political violation. Forced political unity—the unidirectional demand for submission over the mutual play of accommodation—could be no unity at all; in its most aggressive form, as Milton and other anti-Presbyterian writers argued, it amounted to rape.

Observers with a dim view of Milton “the divorcer” and sectarian activity contended, in response, that conscientious metaphors had been overextended into meaninglessness. By 1647, one pamphleteer could cast doubt on all such rhetoric, giving voice to a broader unease that Milton addresses through a turn to poetry. As the anonymous writer wonders,

If all that plead tenderness of conscience may have liberty as they desire...do you not think that a very varlet, or peevish, or perverse man...will plead liberty of conscience to act meer knavery? Surely yes.³⁶

The very accessibility of conscientious discourse, he argues, permitted the indiscriminate participation that should now invalidate it. But, as Milton counters, to draw such a conclusion would be to forfeit one’s capacity to participate in politics as well as poetry. His sonnet, “On the New Forcers of Conscience,” treats the impasse of the conscience as a problem of poetic interpretation, of insensitivity to the nuances native to the realm of figurative language, and necessary to political discourse. The poem, which delivers a ringing conclusion of equivalence (“New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large”), recognizes the threat posed by near resemblance. Presbyterians had joined with Independents to defend against what they characterized as Laud’s violation of tender consciences.³⁷ The severity of the Laudian incursion had been conveyed by equating it with physical force (“soule rape,” as Roger Williams memorably put it).³⁸ But as the “New Presbyters” emerged from among survivors to remake the ecclesiastical order, the simile falters: could they, too, be accused of sexual violence? The question of how to assess such allegations of violence persists, only to become more pressing as Charles, the parliamentary prisoner, decries assaults on the royal conscience.

Central to the period’s debates, as the sonnet’s title indicates, is the problem of force. “Force,” as Milton recognizes, can signify “rape,” but “shearing or clipping” as well; significantly, apparent coincidence does not preclude distinction. The poetic medium demands what the political arena requires—the supple mind that takes in figures of unexpected similitude and violently-yoked conceits without collapsing their equivalence into undifferentiated matter. For the poem’s speaker to attain his wish of seeing the Presbyterians subdued, he would, without

much strain of the imagination, be hailed by the opposition as the newest “New Forcer.” The speaker anticipates critics by assuming the derogatory title: he encourages readers, however, to associate him with the salutary, hygienic “force” or forceps and forfex.

Threatened by forceful impositions, the tender conscience must respond decisively in kind; the pain inflicted by its defensive clipping, however, depends on another incisive distinction. Parliamentary restraint of the Presbyterian-leaning Prynne cannot be equated with Laudian mutilation, as the poem argues, for it stops short. Lashing out at Presbyterian offenders in its final lines, the sonnet hopes that Parliament

May with their wholsom and preventive Shears
Clip your Phylacteries, though bauk your Ears... (lines 16-17)

Phylacteries containing scriptural texts, bound to forehead and arm, had under Jewish law exemplified worshipful commitment to God. For Christians under the covenant of grace, the Holy Spirit’s inscription of these words on the softened heart renders these external signs unnecessary. If only the Presbyterian leadership could grant ecclesiastical hierarchy a similarly vestigial function—once useful in Scotland, unnecessary in the revolutionary age of grace, they could submit to clipping as a painless, “wholsom” trim. But if Presbyterians insist on its seminal role in constituting the body of Christ, the phylactery risks hardening into its aural correspondent, the phallic member. The snipping of the phylactery then suggests the much more violent business of castration, and the forfex-wielding Parliament might then justly be accused of cruelty.³⁹ For Presbyterians to subscribe to this interpretation of parliamentary violence, however, would be to admit, to their own disservice, their inclination to rape in the first place. By this logic, the parliamentary shears—the same with which Charles would become acquainted—are needed for their “preventive” benefits.

Milton’s interpolation of an Italian sonnet into the tradition sets Parliament and Presbyter against each other, rather ingeniously, within a form the Elizabethan poets most often deployed in the service of love. The poet of epic ambitions can be said here to supplant Sidney’s immortal pair with what he insists is an ill-matched and mortal one. He further overturns the Shakespearean precedent and its plea for posterity by toying with procedures for preventing reproduction. In its dense topicality, Milton’s sonnet—for modern readers, a notably difficult one to parse without footnotes—divides his opponents from posterity as well. It refers to no fewer than five Presbyterian leaders in twenty lines, but effectively cuts them off: one man, not worth naming in full, becomes “mere A.S.” The author of *Gangraena*, Thomas Edwards, opposes sectarianism, as we have seen, in three volumes. Milton dispatches him in three words (the Trinity manuscript reads “hare-brained Edwards”), before dismissing Gillespie (the “Scotch What-d’ye-call”) into obscurity. The sonnet’s compression gives it the tension of a set of shears: taut lines press in on each other, dismembering the figures that lie between. Milton offers a bravura performance of the poetic discipline that is the forceful restraint of literary violence; properly understood, he suggests, it obviates the need for more literal bloodshed.

* * *

A pan-European audience makes the acquaintance of the tender conscience through the regicide carried out in its name. The English translator of the French Protestant Claude Saumaise alters his original text to more forcefully incriminate this conscience, making Salmasius vent his fury over and over again at the bloody-minded vulnerability that justified resistance and regicide:

These *tender consciences* [will be allowed by Milton and his comrades] to be preferred before the peace of the Kingdome. Truly these are...apparent absurdities to the eye of every Common judgment, that the *pretended conscience* of every hipocriticall sectarie must be preferred to the peace of a Kingdome....The new leiturgie offered the Scots...was an act befitting the care of a King, and noe man will beleive, that it was an offence [to] their *consciences*, who made noe *conscience* of blood, and Rebellion upon *pretence of their conscience*, which the world sees was an hipocriticall straining at a straw, and swallowing a Camell, and these *tender conscience men* have written their *tendernes of conscience* with the blood of their brethren; which will remain a memoriall of their dissembled sanctitie.⁴⁰

Elsewhere an English clergyman praises the tender conscience as one that can strain at both gnat and camel; here, Salmasius' English interpreter forces the phrase repeatedly in order to dispel its aura.⁴¹ No tender conscience, he insists, but the "pre-tended" one which works to obscure, even at the etymological level, by stretching in front of the political ambitions it aims to conceal.

The king's final meditations effect the most significant turning, or reconversion, if you will, of the tender conscience. In *Eikon Basilike*, Charles I not only claims "true conscientious tenderness," he predicates all appeals for vindication on the rights of a personal, private conscience.⁴² He was forced to reject his subjects' petitions, he explains, out of a profound vulnerability: "Should I grant some things [my subjects] require, I should not so much weaken My outward state of a King; as wound that inward quiet of My Conscience, which ought to be, is, and ever shall be (by God's grace) dearer to Me than My kingdomes" (69). The king strengthens his dying claim to sovereignty by sacrificing his public position to the dictates of an indwelling conscience. Disputes over constitutional rule and ecclesiastical reform dissolve in the king's tears as he reveals the roots of conflict: "'Tis evident now, that it was not evill Counsellours with me, but a good Conscience in me, which hath been fought against..." (184).

The astounding success of the king's last communiqué rests in part on its proximity to spiritual autobiography—its unfolding of the individual believer's struggle with a compelling conscience. The author of *Eikon Basilike*, attuned to a discourse he can finally appropriate, delivers his farewell as a bruised reed. "For Thou, O Lord," he says in one prayer, "knowest My uprightness and tendernes," and in another, "O thou that breakest not the bruized Reed...do not despise the weaknesse of my prayers..." (148, 197). This pathos-laden coup—a conquest, effectively, of tears—leverages all the instincts of emotional responsibility that had been honed against those who had sponsored it. Charles' posthumous triumph turns on this ingenious decision to represent the king not as the nursing father of his people but as a frail, sensitive object of compassion. In a masterful stroke of visual rhetoric, the accompanying engraving shows Charles brought to his knees not by Parliament but by prayer.

III. Conscience as Paradisal Principle: Paradise Lost and the Flowering of Tenderness

Once the tender conscience took shape, its sphere of influence engulfed the domains of religion and politics until neither archbishop nor king could operate without its authority. To a remarkable degree, this sphere of influence expanded by accommodating difference: each invocation could advance a competing vision of social cohesion while inviting new identifications with its broader ideals. The history of the tender conscience thus reveals an order expansive enough to constitute an environment. Through its defining organic metaphors, the tender conscience theorizes a way of being in the world—of encountering one's environs not as

background or horizon but as present, proximate subject with the capacity to act and enjoin (even violently) interdependence instead of selfhood. The tender conscience, without the contemporaneous development of a responsive environment, is nothing at all. Milton so astutely grasps the threat that had been dealt to the century's most important affective ecology that he makes the tender conscience the "one first matter all" of his Paradise.⁴³

With his prose works largely behind him, Milton seeks through poetry a more intuitive register in which to awaken readers' desires for a conscience that had not always existed to serve political interest. As he rewrites the ultimate story of nostalgia, Milton transposes the longing for lost paradise into a longing for an innocently tender conscience. The epic thoroughly disperses it into images: the structure of his universe, from the very foundations and substance of the paradisaical world outward, bends according to its accommodating logic. A belated name for virtuous sensitivity, the tender conscience provides the most fruitful context in which to understand Eve's tears and the problems of paradisaical pain and power.

Readers of *Paradise Lost* first encounter the material manifestations of this conscience through images that establish the fictive world's imaginative possibilities. In one key effect that recurs throughout, linear edges soften, virtually blending with curved contours. When Satan emerges from Chaos in book 2, for example, he sees "Empyrean Heav'n, extended wide/ In circuit, undetermined square or round" (2.1047-48). Heaven, so meticulously measured in Revelation to confirm its cubic dimensions, loses its angular sides; its square is made to share imaginative space with "circuit" and circle. In this balanced interplay of tensile strength, both exist at once. Carefully poised at the threshold of our entry into the third book, this glimpse prepares us for its divine deliberations. The reader's struggle with the impossibly-squared circle primes us to reconcile the rigid rule of the Father's justice with the Son's gracious turn. The indeterminate, in-between shape plays on the Euclidean representation of moral concepts: the orthogonal of orthodoxy and straight edge of rectitude blur with the gentle curves of lenience.

The oscillating image that allows harsh edges to diffuse into soft contours persists in depictions of heaven's military might. These images of mollification disclose the Miltonic vision for the acceptable exercise of power. Initially, two of the most prominent symbols of heaven's military might—its offensive and defensive power, respectively—stand firm. Figured through the poetics of the tender conscience, however, the rigidly orthogonal forms of both angelic spears and the celestial wall are pressed into waves. In book 4's standoff between Satan and the paradisaical guards, the angels' "ported Spears," held under the spell of an epic simile, become undulating stalks, "as thick as when a field/ Of *Ceres* ripe for harvest waving bends" (4.980-81). The spears become precursors of victory only when sharp edges unite in the mind's eye with pliant forms. The poet strains our imaginative capacities: he hints at a sensuously concrete, earthbound image before bending it past its most familiar configurations. In another instance from book 6, a familiar edifice marks heaven's outer perimeter—there's a wall. But the wall caves inward, and with it, our fixed conceptions of the wall as defensive monument. The damaged wall significantly "return[s] whence it rowld" after the expulsion of the angels, repairing itself in the same smooth, fluid motion with which it succumbed (6.879). Repeatedly, the text forces our imaginations to process straight lines as curved, yielding a resilient plasticity in mind and image alike.

Such images figure the personal motto that Milton inscribed in autograph books: divine strength is made perfect in weakness.⁴⁴ But where this motto proclaims divine power through and despite the tragic facts of human frailty, these images edge further in their assertive institution of weakness. They depict weakness *as* strength, and moreover embed this reversal

into a consistent natural order that obtains quite apart from human or angelic agency. The relations of physical properties and forces that were being codified in Milton's age as the laws of physics can be imagined to have linguistic counterparts. The property of hardness (*dūr-*) at the heart of such concepts as "endurance" and "durability" welds permanence and persistence to the physical attribute of unyielding strength. But our intuitive grasp of these relations does not hold in the unfallen order in which Satan, "like *Teneriff* or *Atlas* unremov'd," ultimately flees from rippling spear-stalks (4.987). In this realm, the simile commending Satan's monumental strength also diminishes him when we recall that angelic warriors once "pluckt the seated Hills" aloft (6.644). That the hills can be reduced through a choice verb into ripened produce suggests the durability that belongs instead to bowing ears of grain. Even the chaff they produce might outweigh *Tenerife's* volcanic mass in the divine scales.

The environment and elements of Milton's poetic world revive a once-thriving affective ecology for a Restoration society in which the tender conscience was being displaced. The epic's organic world bears within it the poignant desire for a political order modeled after the properties of its prelapsarian matter. After all, the poet's reordering of physical hierarchies upends relations of political strength and weakness as well. Milton's images render visible a world under the sway of the yielding, tender conscience: the angelic scepter, an instrument of violent enforcement, is most powerfully wielded as a spear-stalk. The passivity and responsiveness which allows spears to cede their place and bow in deference "which way the wind/ Swayes them" also belies their martial rows (4.982-83). The invisible breath that ripples across might change its course at a moment's notice, but the agile stalks respond at its slightest touch in cascading unison. The intensity of their swirling confirms, quite literally, the underlying roots of security.⁴⁵

Strength aligns once more with fluidity and apparent weakness in the case of the rolling celestial wall. Viewed alongside book 2's description of heaven, the hues of the scene mellow into "Opal Towers and Battlements adorn'd/ Of living Saphire" (2.1049-50). The sapphire is animated, no doubt, by iridescent rays. It proves most vividly alive, however, when the tower into which it rises descends. It recalls another collapsing tower, one formed under Moses' watch in Exodus, when "the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea... and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."⁴⁶ The pursuing Egyptians are confronted with the full defensive capacity of this azure wall when it dissolves. Once again, the softening, bending, and swaying of these images constitute the Miltonic conditions of enduring, even violent, strength.

The material aspects of organic forms, as Elaine Scarry has suggested, can illuminate the translucent, ephemeral properties of mental images; the diaphanous tissues of flowers in Scarry's reading render imaginative thought itself palpable.⁴⁷ Her exploration effects a dual movement akin to the attribute-transfer of Milton's spear-stalks: mental images attain visibility as they gain the delicacy of floral tissue, even as flowers themselves are freshly recalled from mental abstraction into haptic experience. The flowers' fragility, which requires the mind to handle crepe-like petals with care, enlivens them, alongside the environments of their mental compositions: to imagine the delicate flower is to imagine, too, the breeze that might set its wings aflutter, or the pressure that splays one petal in two.

When Milton depicts paradisaical flowers in their full fragility, he similarly enlivens them. Through granting them, as it were, the delicacy of fresh floral tissue, Milton provides new ways for apprehending an organism that often disappears in the course of reading into a load-bearing concept. By calling attention to the distinctive physical properties of flowers, Milton liberates them from modes of reading that consign them, on either side, to the gravitas of allegory or the

levity of ornament. If allegory is the mode which freights images and objects with meaning beyond their everyday burden, the phenomenological readings invited by the poem relieve the flower of this need to symbolize. By feeling through its physical attributes, such readings lift the flower, too, out of the lighter, ornamental role it might play—the gilding for the golden world of the Renaissance poet, in which it merely confirms an aesthetic judgment that has already been assumed (the beauty of Paradise, for example).

Throughout *Paradise Lost*, flowers are the organisms defined most memorably by their fragility. Indeed, the flowers of Paradise seem to become so through an array of petals that sag, unable to sustain their own weight. Think of the bowing blossoms that Eve carefully tends: as they “Hung drooping unsustained, them she upstays/ Gently with Mirtle band” (9.430-31). One by one, Eve must lift the blooms that cannot lift themselves. The roses of the bower’s roof repair themselves daily, but the profusion of new petals forces them down each night. The perfection of the garden oddly expresses itself in flowers more vulnerable than those in postlapsarian plots, and the poem repeatedly subjects wispy, fragile petals to what seem to be stress tests. Even in heaven, where unfading flowers are preserved as eternally delicate, the angels toss “loose Garlands” of amaranth wreaths to the floor (3.362). The softness of these flowers, which we see elsewhere trod as carpet and crushed as bedding, is not a passive, languorous one; it’s a vital elasticity that yields before springing back in full bloom. In Paradise, as we shall see, the most delicate organisms are also the ones that are most easily repaired.

Nightly, when the garden draws its silken sheets, petal by petal, across the sleeping pair, it matches the delicacy of skin to flower. The petals melt not only with the expanse of skin but the innocent conscience that subtends it all. The tender conscience—as bruised reed and living tissue more sensitive than skin—finds its counterpart in the petals of Paradise, which themselves are likened by Raphael to ethereal being. Softness traverses the whole scale of being, linking flowers to angels, and the teary-eyed figure that resembles both. As part of the image-complex which famously vexed Milton’s boldest critic, Richard Bentley, Eve’s form is portrayed as “Angelic, but more soft” (9.458). “If Eve had been more soft...” Bentley scoffs, “she would have been no fit mate for her husband.”⁴⁸ Bentley senses that this softness, in the epic’s scheme, evokes less supple femininity than angelic refinement. The paradisaical order of tender conscience that invests soft matter with strength so deliberately and unexpectedly must likewise structure our perceptions of Eve’s tearful weakness.

Flowers, conscience, and Eve—their fragility ends in the paradisaical strength of resilience. The confirmation (in other words, the firming or strengthening) that vulnerability provides, however, introduces delicate problems of repair and support. What injuries, to either flowers or conscience, are admissible in Paradise? When does pain become so great as to render Paradise no paradise at all? The fall itself is implicated in the answers to these questions. When Eve separates from Adam, she underestimates, as readers will remember, her need for spousal support. Conversely, however, she overestimates the extent to which her flowers need her. Eve’s proposal of separation, as Christopher Ricks has noted, reveals her floral preoccupations. Adam may go wherever he likes; Eve wishes to tend to the roses and myrtles. Two hundred lines intervene—Adam urges her to remain, to enjoy a more leisurely pace of work—before the reader finds Eve right where she had intended, with the roses and myrtles.⁴⁹ Eve rejects the casual attitude to work that her husband espouses in part because she fears the neglect of her fragile charges. A drooping rose here and there does not bother Adam as it does his solicitous wife (he will even undo her work later by weaving a crown of roses). As the tragic separation suggests, Eve’s flowers should

be permitted to bow, droop, and bend. In overestimating the relief she supplies, Eve forgets the resilience that sustains live flowers in her absence.

Adam is similarly mistaken about the resilience of Eve, his own “fairest unsupported flower” (9.432). When the pressure of the nightmare draws tears, Adam rushes to comfort his wife. The chiasmic relation suggests a proportionate response—“So cheard he his fair Spouse, and she was cheared”—“But silently a gentle tear let fall...,” the text immediately adds (5.129-30). Eve blots the tears with her hair, Adam kisses the rest away, and the text makes another attempt to speed us along: “So all was cleard...” (5.136). This dismissal has left readers uneasy. The chronology of the sequence does not bear out the text’s claim. Eve’s tears creep out after she’s supposedly been cheered. And the text, some seventy-odd lines after “all was cleard,” describes a prayerful return. Only after morning orisons do Adam and Eve find “Firm peace recoverd soon and wonted calm”—the unrest lingers even after the utterance of the prayer (5.210).

Readers who have noted in this episode the foreshadowing of the Fall have not taken the parallel far enough, for Adam’s loving, and tragically errant, response to Eve in book 9 finds precedent here. The displacement within this episode signals Adam’s misguided haste to restore and comfort Eve. In its allusion to the starlit exchange of the previous night, the dream hints at the mind’s plasticity and the impressions it retains. But Adam, in soothing Eve, neither inquires after the meaning of Eve’s tears nor acknowledges the vapors that might persist in the streams of fancy. Even after setting aside the epistemological challenges (Adam cannot know the evil origins of the dream), the phenomenological lapse is troubling, for Milton’s contemporaries knew that the pricks of conscience should at the very least be considered. Instead, Adam is quick to declare, with the text, that “all was cleard...” (5.136). He alludes here to the clarity of casuistry: by deeming the dream legally permissible, he clears Eve, the confessor-cum-defendant, of all charges of wrongdoing. “Evil in the mind of God or Man/ May come and go, so unapprov’d...” he explains as he consoles her (5.117-18). Not content to stop here, Adam rushes in with a slew of other comforts: a psychological explanation for the dream (Reason vs. Fancy), a wrongheaded prediction of its effects (“what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream/ Waking thou never wilt consent to do”), compliments (Eve’s “looks/[are]...more chearful and serene/ Than...fair Morning”), and finally, kisses (5.100-16, 120-21, 122-24).

Milton’s editors dutifully note the scene’s allusion to the woman in the Gospels, weeping at Christ’s feet. She dabs the tears that fall with her hair.⁵⁰ Unlike his overeager counterpart, however, Christ allows the penitent to weep on, lending only the comfort of silent regard. Adam emphatically does not resemble Christ in this regard as much as he does a character from romance. When one figure from Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* begins to weep at unkind words from a friend, the other falls to his knees

kissing the weeping eyes. . . . But even this kindness made Pyrocles the more melt in the former unkindness, which his manlike tears well showed. . . . And this strook Musidorus’s mind and senses so dumb too, that for grief not being able to say anything, they rested with their eyes placed one upon another. . . . And thus remained they a time.⁵¹

Adam strives to create for Eve this tableau of harmonious friendship, mistaking Eve’s pain as the insupportable grief of a Pyrocles. But Eve’s apparent vulnerability, like those of her flowers, does not need to inspire this sense of urgency.

As with her floral counterparts in the bower’s roof, Eve has come undone in the course of the night. The passage of time is so central to repairing these roses, though, that the text grants it

a syntactically active role: the “*Morn repair’d*” them (4.772-73, italics added). With the coming of dawn, the flowers, as well as the lovers they envelop, are “repair’d” in the sense of being paired again—reunited after the separation of slumber.⁵² The paradisaical flowers partake in a cyclical pattern of repair and regrowth: in the bower, the delicate flowers unfold, from bud to bloom, across the span of a day. The process of healing and repair defines their life’s work, leaving no room for a state of hardy maturation; this period of regrowth is the condition of their existence. Vulnerability, and indeed, separation—the nightly divorce of consciousness—are divinely ordained elements of the paradisaical experience. For the human pair, then, to seek the instantaneous healing of the conscience through the comforts of companionship is to miss the more extended and individual process of repair. The proleptic desire to clear away this matter—to bury rather than to cultivate vulnerability—lulls the conscience into a deceptive state of repair, sapping the demonic dream of its cautionary power.

The epic offers through Adam’s failed consolation a wistful celebration of the tender conscience. Eve cries, again, after Adam has already assured her of innocence. It is not enough for Eve to know that she is spotless in a legal sense: she grieves, as the tender consciences of Milton’s past, even over the hint of sin in things indifferent, blotting at the traces of translucent stains.⁵³ This reading of Eve’s tears, at least, is the one Adam provides. Unwilling to accept any other explanation for her grief, Adam supplies his own: on seeing the “precious drops” in Eve’s eyes, he, “ere they fell/ Kiss’d [them] *as the gracious signs of sweet remorse/ And pious awe, that fear’d to have offended*” (5.133-35, italics added). The text leaves much to hang on Adam’s uncertain similitude. His account may imperfectly subsume the emotion borne along by Eve’s tears, but the tension is telling. In his adoration for her, Adam chooses to see Eve as a tender conscience—a choice to which Eve does not object. Even those in Paradise wish to find themselves tender consciences.

Eve’s tears invite the readers’ own as they mark the first of the epic’s phases of mourning. The precursor of tears shed at the Fall and exile, the tears here mark the fall of the tender conscience, when it comes to be experienced as extraneous pain. Vulnerability only appears to Adam as inadequacy in need of horizontal confirmation; for the only human inhabitants of Paradise, this alliance is also a political one. We might say that the epic registers a profound ambivalence about the godly comforter—not only Adam but Milton’s contemporary, the well-meaning Lord Protector—who rushes to preserve paradise but just might have helped to hasten its demise. The resonance, of course, extends far beyond the case of Oliver Cromwell; Milton here figures the perpetual temptation to treat the tender conscience as a weak one.

The dream is never again rehearsed. Its silent withdrawal contributes to the sense that not much more can be said about it. The epic solicits acceptance of this disappearance as part of its internal logic, as if expecting more continuity would be a generic mistake—it’s not a novel, after all. From one perspective, the dream’s absence from the mimetic and diegetic planes does not matter so much since it provides necessary theological justification (that is to say, Milton’s God did not ambush Adam and Eve; a firsthand experience of evil was provided before the Fall). But I want to embrace the simplest possible reading of the dream’s disappearance: the Fall could have been avoided as easily as heeding the dream’s warning. The dream was not allowed to do its work. If it could not wound the heart deeply enough to leave a scar, neither could it pierce, in the slightest, the surface of memory. When Adam sedated Eve’s conscience with a kiss, he helped, too, to erase the firsthand experience that was hers to keep. It is no accident that Satan’s temptation is a test of the memory, among other things. The epic is Milton’s vision of a present world haunted by forgotten dreams.

* * *

In the Trinity Manuscript's early creative vision of *Paradise Lost*, Milton employs the allegorical figure of Conscience to call Adam and Eve to account after the Fall.⁵⁴ By the Restoration, Conscience cannot carry out his office so publicly: he looks very much like a war criminal. His functions must be redistributed, submerged in both the environment and angelic identity. Milton's readers are increasingly suspicious of a faculty dedicated to the discovery of sin. Through decades of conflict, conscience had proven, it seems, overly successful in its faultfinding missions. When Raphael, for a very brief moment, plays tender conscience to Milton's Adam, his sensitivity is crucially integrated with a more general identity as the "sociable Spirit" (5.221). The conscience, to avoid accusations of hasty suspicion, must be made amenable to the friendly, sociable conversation that enlarges its purview of motivation and intention.

On hearing Adam retell the story of his birth and union with Eve, Raphael warns of inordinate affection before adding an unsolicited caution about lust:

But if the sense of touch whereby mankind
Is propagated seem such dear delight
Beyond all other, think the same vouchsaf't
To Cattel and each Beast... (8.579-82)

Raphael takes the liberty of drawing inferences from Adam's experience. The conditional note of this warning ("But if...") attests to its status as conjecture; the angelic spirit, as the tender conscience, probes past the limits of certain knowledge.⁵⁵ Raphael's interpretation of Adam's account remains attentive to affects that might still be swirling inchoate, not yet reclaimed from Chaos as self-knowledge. Adam's description of "vehement desire" may veer in this direction, though he never explicitly attributes superior delight to touch (8.526). As he tells it, the sight of Eve strolling through the garden alone is enough to send him into transports of grateful ecstasy:

Grace was in all her steps, Heav'n in her Eye,
In every gesture dignitie and love.
I overjoy'd could not forbear aloud. (8.488-90)

Unlike Adam, who rushes with comfort to assuage the troubled conscience, Raphael administers discomfort, pricking Adam where no sin-wounds may exist. The apparent groundlessness of Raphael's accusation, which delves straight into the couple's intimate affairs, presents a case of innocent, paradisaal error. Without such wanton errors of interpretive venture, Paradise is lost.

Chapter Two

¹ A line of divines from William Perkins to William Ames, and even more heterodox thinkers like Henry More, assumed the innocent tranquility of conscience in Paradise. The following articulation from William Gouge could have been delivered by any one of his contemporaries: before the Fall, “Adam’s conscience in his integrity did excuse him before God, because there was nothing in him blameworthy”; *The Whole-Armor of God*, 247. In More’s Neoplatonist reading of Genesis, the Fall becomes a protracted, allegorical descent, but he insists nonetheless that “there being no sin [before the Fall], there could not as yet be any shame in Adam”; *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, 172.

² The present discussion dovetails with existing scholarship on toleration and “liberty of conscience,” but recovers an expansive discourse of “toleration before tolerationism” that is not solely, or even primarily, concerned with religious uniformity. (I am thinking, of course, of Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*.) Andrew R. Murphy, *Conscience and Community: Revisiting Toleration and Religious Dissent in Early Modern England and America* offers a useful reconsideration of toleration. The discourse I excavate here can be assimilated to tolerationist arguments, but merits discussion apart from either republican or liberal discourses that look back to classical theories of political freedom or ahead to orders of enlightened secularism. This chapter takes the tender conscience and not toleration as its investigative crux in part because the former’s structure and historically-specific role so effortlessly disclose what Martha Nussbaum has had to insist on: emotions, as “forms of evaluative thought,” are central to ethical judgments; see her *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotion*, 11.

³ My sense of popular religion is informed less by Eamon Duffy’s account of *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992) than Paul Seaver’s study of lay Protestantism; see *Wallington’s World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London*. When the artisan Nehemiah Wallington confides in his diary, he records an intimate acquaintance with the phenomenon at hand: “Oh says [his] conscience [to him] why wilt thou wound me which am so loving and tender a friend to thee...?” (*The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654: A Selection*, ed. David Booy, 291). The urban Puritan milieu of Seaver’s account is of course a minority, but distinctive elements of its culture obtained far beyond those immediately associated with “the godly” during the early seventeenth century. For two differing accounts that attend, respectively, to the persistence of traditional religion and conformist religious sentiment, see Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, and Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*.

⁴ For another account of the reformation of sensuous appetite as it relates to experimental science and the modern culture of knowledge production, see Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England*, especially chap. 3. Contemporary representations of the innocent investigator, Picciotto argues, saw him renouncing his individual, sensitive body to take part in the public, spectatorial recovery of Nature’s truths. My findings suggest that the fallen sensitivity from which Picciotto’s Adamic laborer must dissociate himself had been at least partially redeemed through its capacity to figure the lively conscience. The unincorporated individual’s experience yields politically consequential knowledge.

⁵ The Thirty-Nine Articles call for obedience to “the traditions and ceremonies of the Church...ordained and approved by common authority” in order to avoid “wound[ing] the

conscience of the weak brethren”; see Church of England, *Articles Whereupon it was Agreed by the Archbysshops*, 28.

⁶ Milton, *Areopagitica*, in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 2:537. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *CPW*.

⁷ George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against the English-Popish Ceremonies*, 116.

⁸ Charged with sedition under Archbishop Laud in 1637, Prynne had had his cheeks branded, his nose slit, and his ears sliced off.

⁹ William Prynne, *The Antipathie of the English Lordly Prelacie*, 279.

¹⁰ See Laura Perille, “Harnessing Conscience for the King: Charles I, the Forced Loan Sermons, and Matters of Conscience.”

¹¹ John White, *Mr. Whites Speech in Parliament on Munday the 17th of January* (1641), 3.

¹² George Digby, *The Third Speech of the Lord George Digby to the House of Commons Concerning Bishops and the Citie Petition the 9th of Febr. 1640* (1640), 13-14.

¹³ Henry Parker, *A Discourse Concerning Puritans Tending to a Vindication of Those, who Unjustly Suffer...* (1641), 14.

¹⁴ [Richard Bernard], *A Short View of the Praelaticall Church of England*, 26. Bernard’s pastoral experience was the basis for *Christian See to thy Conscience* (1631), which offered remedies for consciences that were blind, superstitious, desperate, overly secure, or otherwise ailing.

¹⁵ John Tombes, *Christs Commination against Scandalizers* (1641), 296-297.

¹⁶ Compare with the Scottish resistance theorists of the 1550s, who primarily understood their struggle as one with idolatry; see John Coffey, “The Language of Liberty in Calvinist Political Thought,” in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, 1:296-316.

¹⁷ [Francis Rous and Joshua Sprigge], *The Ancient Bounds, or Liberty of Conscience Tenderly Stated...* (1645), 11. For questions of authorship, see J. Sears McGee, “Francis Rous and ‘Scabby or Itchy Children’: The Problem of Toleration in 1645.”

¹⁸ [Rous and Sprigge], *The Ancient Bounds*, 21.

¹⁹ Quoted in McGee, “Francis Rous,” 403.

²⁰ See G. Richard Dimler, “Edmund Arwaker’s Translation of the *Pia Desideria*: The Reception of a Continental Emblem Book in Seventeenth-Century England,” pp. 203-204. See also Alison Saunders, *The Seventeenth-Century French Emblem: A Study in Diversity*, ch. 5.

²¹ I do not mean at all to imply that English readers rejected emblem books; George Wither and Frances Quarles, of course, gained a devoted following in the 1630s. The Jesuits developed the emblem book into a series of devotional exercises, but Protestants produced emblem books as well—often ones designed to be read in a more desultory fashion. The first book of sacred emblems, as Barbara Lewalski notes, was in fact written by a French Protestant, Georgette de Montenay; see *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, ch. 6.

²² The pamphlet boldly advertises its lack of official authority—its anonymity and illicit origins—by way of a preface directly addressed “To the Reader”: “It is a *Priviledge* in *Parliament* time, due to the *freeborn Subjects* of England, that the *Printing Presses* should bee free, especially to the friends of *Tender Conscience*, But this being now *Monopolized* from them

by the *persecuting Presbyters*, *Tender Conscience* cannot have his *dictats* published with *Imprimatur*...but it forced to seek *Corners*, and by *lanes* to presse out *Truth*"; see *The Tender Conscience Religiously Affected* (London, 1646).

²³ J.C. Davis, quoted in Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004), 18.

²⁴ Edwards, *The First and Second Part of Gangraena*, 66.

²⁵ C.S. Lewis actually uses this phrase—as apt a description of the visual medium as I have come across—to characterize the narrative urgency of *The Pilgrim's Progress*; see "The Vision of John Bunyan," 152.

²⁶ [Henry Parker?], *Accommodation Cordially Desired and Really Intended* (1642), 21.

²⁷ Proponents of experimental religion often invoked the Pauline sense of a faith that needs to be "worked out"; see *Philippians* 2:12.

²⁸ George Gillespie, *Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty* (1645), 36-37.

²⁹ Blair Worden quoted in Sean Kelsey, *Inventing a Republic: The Political Culture of the English Commonwealth, 1649-1653* (Manchester, 1997), 4; Derek Hirst, *Authority and Conflict, England 1603-58* (Cambridge, 1986), 292. As Hirst notes elsewhere, grand schemes either of reform or repression were not forthcoming, for "the history of the Rump must...[quite simply] be written around the problem of survival"; see *England in Conflict 1603-1660* (London, 1999), 258.

³⁰ See David Como, "Print, Censorship, and Ideological Escalation in the English Civil War," *The Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 4 (2012): 820-857.

³¹ Anon., *An Answer to a book intituled, The doctrine and discipline of divorce, or, A plea for ladies and gentlewomen, and all other married [sic] women against divorce wherein both sexes are vindicated from all bonadge [sic] of canon law, and other mistakes whatsoever ...* (London, 1644), 8-9.

³² Anon., *An Answer*, 7.

³³ See Jean Hagstrum, *Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart* (Chicago, 1980).

³⁴ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), 415.

³⁵ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, 425.

³⁶ George Palmer, *Sectaries Unmasked and Confuted* (London, 1647), 21.

³⁷ John Milton, "On the New Forcers of Conscience," in *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, rev. 2nd ed. (Harlow, 2007), line 20. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

³⁸ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* ([London], 1644), 94.

³⁹ The poem's reference to Paul points as well to this threat of castration. Circumcision, Paul had insisted, cannot be a requirement for salvation. In his frustration, he wishes that his opponents would go all the way and castrate themselves (*Galatians* 5:12).

⁴⁰ Joseph Jane, *Salmasius His Dissection and Confutation of the Diabolical Rebel Milton* (London, 1660), 177, 200. Italics added. Compare with the Salmasius' original:

“Hinc igitur incipiemus hoc genus hominum quale sit describere, suisque coloribus depingere, qui Carolum primum regem suum Martyrii passione coronarunt. Sanguis eius sit super illos.... Ea gratia ne videantur in apertum disciplinae suae pestilentis virus effundere, quantum possunt, id celatum cupiunt, variorum criminum quae dominantibus affingunt, praetextu. In quibus exaggerandis saepe de festuca trabem vel tignum faciunt, ipsi interea omnium flagitiorum mole cooperti, quae *puritatis & sanctitatis* velamento adumbrant. Conscientias enim delicatas & teneras se habere dictitant; quae tamen cameli deglutiendi capaces esse possunt, dum culices eliquare se simulant.”

[Claudius Salmasius], *Defensio Regia Pro Carolo I* ([Leiden], 1649), 557-558.

⁴¹ For the riff on Matthew 23:24, see Younge, *Cure of Misprision*, 94.

⁴² *Eikon Basilike*, ([London], 1649), 120.

⁴³ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Barbara Lewalski (Oxford, 2007), 5.472. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *PL*. Though the present analysis sets aside questions about Milton’s theory of matter, my readings are consistent with works that consider the poet’s animist materialism. See John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca, 1996), 104-111; Stephen Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca, 1991, 98-107); and N.K. Sugimura, “*Matter of Glorious Trial*”: *Spiritual and Material Substance in Paradise Lost* (New Haven, 2009).

⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 12:9: “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...” Milton took this as his motto after losing his sight completely in the 1650s; see Barbara K. Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 2000), 338.

⁴⁵ One eighteenth-century reprise of this image illuminates the technique by which Milton weaponizes the bruised reed. In the icy landscape of Ambrose Philips’s “A Winter-Piece” (1709), “the thick-sprung Reeds the wat’ry Marshes yield / Seem polish’d Lances in a hostile Field,” lines 37–38, in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, 2nd ed., ed. David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Malden, MA, 2004), 20. By appealing to a seasonal process of hardening, the poet fuses reed and lance. Milton, however, reverses this more conventional transformation by adapting his vision to the malleable properties of poetic imagery itself. The unsteeling of spears into soft, organic substance is enabled by the corresponding decay of mental images—their propensity to diffuse, blur, and soften into yet more spectral forms.

⁴⁶ Exodus 14:22

⁴⁷ Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (Princeton, 2001), 22-23, 43-49.

⁴⁸ Richard Bentley, *Milton’s Paradise Lost: A New Edition* (London, 1732), 9.458.

⁴⁹ Christopher Ricks, *Milton’s Grand Style* (Oxford, 1963), 144.

⁵⁰ See Luke 7.

⁵¹ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford, 1985), 22–23.

⁵² For more on this pun, see Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 482. As objects of care and labor, paradisaical flowers for Picciotto figure the disciplined, curated vision (the rose-colored lenses, if you will) through which fallen readers can glimpse innocent sexuality (476-492). I share

Picciotto's sense of the rarity of Miltonic flowers, but where she sees a translucent lens, I find the fragility of the bruised reed.

⁵³ Sara Cooper's untitled undergraduate essay on Eve's tears has been helpful in allowing me to see translucence as that sheen which both does and does not stain sinlessness. For another reading, see Michael Schoenfeldt, "'Commotion Strange': Passion in *Paradise Lost*," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia, 2004), 59-60, which draws from humoral theory to suggest that Eve's tears serve a purgative function.

⁵⁴ I was alerted to this appearance by Jessica C. Beckman, "Milton's Evolving Faculty of Conscience: 'On the New Forcers of Conscience,' *A Treatise of Civil Power*, and *Paradise Lost*," *Exemplaria* 24, nos. 1-2 (2012): 46-61.

⁵⁵ My sense of Adam's experience has been enriched by Joe Moshenska, "'Transported Touch': The Sense of Feeling in Milton's Eden," *ELH* 79, no. 1 (2012): 1-31. But I am more interested in the sheer intensity of Adam's vision ("transported I behold" [*PL* 8.39]) and the suggestion that paradisaal sight could impart the virtual thrill of touch.

CHAPTER TWO

Tenderized Subjects: Empiricism, Liberalism, and Dissent

In Ian Watt's formative account of literary history, which runs roughly parallel to C.B. Macpherson's political theory of possessive individualism, the British novel emerges from the same spirit of individualism that shapes modern forms of liberalism, capitalism, and empiricism.¹ As the shortcomings of these latter structures have become increasingly apparent, novelistic subjects have been set apart and handled cautiously, as guilty relations that require public disavowal.² To scholars today, they look like literary history's most effective and embarrassing contribution to a core problem of modern liberalism; the perceived depth of early novelistic characters has especially been treated as the product of a "secret history" in need of corrective exposure.³ Alongside these readings, I wish to supply another that reroutes the development of novelistic subjectivity through the historical ideal of the tender conscience. As I have suggested, tender consciences appealed to a Pauline model of community formation that united affective cultivation with collective existence. Thinking through the conscience makes it possible to pry apart two concepts often treated together: the problem of subjective depth and the problem of individualism. Lynn Festa's caution against literary critical assumptions "bequeathed to us...by eighteenth-century sentimentality—that the attribution of 'depth' and 'selfhood' is a priori restorative" is one this project takes to heart.⁴ By revisiting local contestations of tenderness prior to the rise of sentimental culture, this chapter offers another way into the social meaning of subjectivity as it appears in the early British novel.

When Daniel Defoe and fellow nonconformists first assimilated the writings of John Locke into dissenting culture, the subjects they envisioned did not embrace the "angular individualism" that many scholars now recognize.⁵ The most trenchant critics of liberalism have read Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* as a work that limits the role of the state to preserving the private property of an even more limited subject. The self-enclosed subject of Lockean political thought—the *homo economicus* that resembles, for many literary critics, Defoe's most well-known character—has likewise been detected in Lockean epistemology, to which Defoe's readers have paid less attention.⁶ Perhaps the connection, as it is understood, seems too obvious: as the arbiter of reality, the subject of empiricism accumulates sensory data, never failing to note the circumstantial particulars that ground him firmly in the world of earthen pots and account books. Critics from Samuel Taylor Coleridge to M.H. Abrams (as if casting about for the individual mind to be superseded by the Romantics' creative genius) have passed over the fundamentally collective character of Baconian empiricism to locate in its Lockean successor a lone and largely passive receptacle that substitutes facts for truth.⁷

In what follows, I resituate Lockean thought and Defoe's novels within the broader history of the tender conscience. The tender conscience, as the young Locke would have observed during the Civil War years, pushed for the public privilege of sensitivity. His mature political theory preserves this distinguished role, and his philosophical writings further assert its epistemological reach. It is difficult to overstate the enormity of the Lockean epistemological task and the capabilities it entailed. More wax than stone, the *tabula rasa* of Locke's imagination proves pliable, as thought itself depends on the mind's vulnerability to impressions. The cultivation of impressionability becomes the mind's primary work; as one historian of philosophy puts it, eighteenth-century theorists after Locke "reduced the powers of mind to one, the ability to receive impressions."⁸ The active powers of the mind accounted for by faculty

psychology—imagination, memory, will—would not disappear, but they would be recast within the mold of impressionability.

It should hardly come as a surprise that this new schema of mind follows from an altered schema of conscience. Why wouldn't Lockean consciousness and the awareness of thought owe something to the feeling of *conscientious* thought? As impressionability remade epistemology, further changes in the ethico-political realm followed. As I shall argue, Locke envisions a political subject constituted by receptivity, both epistemological and conscientious, and believes, as so many of his contemporaries do, that conscience-bearing subjects require the "tenderizing" processes that shape the characters of Defoe's novels. The inviolable rights of the Lockean subject are those of an endlessly impressionable conscience; Locke defends, in other words, the right to the perpetual cultivation of receptivity. Without such painstaking cultivation, Defoe's characters lay themselves open to the Lockean charge of "stupidity" and endanger their souls at the very same time. By offering a clearer understanding of what Locke and Defoe thought they were doing, and the conditions in which that thought could be accepted as morally sustainable, this chapter outlines an unfamiliar empiricism and an even stranger liberalism, neither of which may be irrelevant to tender consciences in the twenty-first century.

I. "Thorns and Briars": The Problem of Dissent

"There is nothing so ungovernable as a tender conscience."⁹

– Samuel Parker

When the future bishop of Oxford wrote the words above in 1670, he set the terms for what would remain, for the next half century, England's most pressing domestic issue: the relation of self-identified "tender consciences" to the church and state. A truly tender conscience, Parker argued, should have capitulated to the demands of Restoration authorities long ago. For all his opposition to nonconformists, Parker derives a competing vision of tenderness from images he shares in common with them. "A Conscience that is only weak and tender," he maintains, "is of a yielding and pliable temper, it is soft and innocent, ...apt to comply with the Commands of its Superiours, and easily capable of all impressions tending to Peace and Charity" (*Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, 283-84). Parker keeps the bare image of the bruised reed, but does away with the accompanying logic discussed in the previous chapter—the metaphorical entailments that had, most memorably in *Paradise Lost*, linked impressionability to strength. Nevertheless, this metaphorical logic persists; as this chapter argues, it receives its most intuitive, if not obvious, elaboration in Locke's *Essay*.

Parker's tendentious redescription exemplifies a broader Restoration trend that severs the tender conscience from a responsive environment. Gone is the ideal of the fluid, self-regulating, and mutually accommodating collective of consciences. Pliability expresses itself in genuflection before a distant assembly of lawgivers for whom the ideals of tender conscience no longer apply. As part of a division of labor within the political body, Parker's "Superiours" increasingly exempt themselves from the tenderness that they nonetheless urge on others in the name of peace. As lawgivers become identified with the immutable law of nature that sustains the political order, the resulting political divide recalls the period's more reassuring depictions of nature (and indeed, paradise). The leisure of the pastoral retreat and georgic's light labor beckon away from the corrupting influences of courtly vice, urban commercialism—and, one might add,

nonconformist strife. The habitat of the bruised reed—that vision of a dense, fragile environment fraught with the uneasy choices needed to maintain cohabitation—is harder and harder to locate. This environment had been participatory in sometimes threatening ways, as inhabitants cultivated tenderness with its instinctive tension. As the natural world of the Augustan age, like its much-heralded state of peace, distances itself from dissension to ensure the garden-dweller’s innocence, it renders fully paradoxical for the first time—in the strong sense of posing as outright contradiction—the “unnatural” world of the tender conscience.

As debates over comprehension stalled, tender consciences were denounced more firmly than ever as figures of intractability. Parker and other defenders of the established church were at pains to show that dissenters gave the lie to claims of tenderness. In one principal strategy for discrediting these claims, critics inspired by the success of Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* portrayed a quixotic obstinacy. Parker notes that

when men insconce themselves in their own Wills, they are there Impregnable. Wilfulness is enchanted Armour, upon which the sharpest Steel makes no Impression; and they [that is, nonconformists] are secure from the Power of conviction...Otherwise nothing could be more apparent to any man...that never any Cause in the world was more shamefully baffled and triumphed over, than this of Schismatical Non-conformity. (*Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, xii)

Despite Parker’s revisions to the ideal of tenderness, the charge of hardness remains devastating: hardness of heart and mind represent the epistemological and political intransigence that render whole groups “ungovernable” and unfit for public life. The Civil War has come to a close, and so, too, the Commonwealth. It remains only for the truly tender dissenter to accept defeat. The dissenter, to borrow Parker’s canny depiction, insists on the contrary that steel-tipped reality is only political fact, and a political fact, furthermore, that only cuts so deep. His obduracy, as Parker argues, proclaims the mental incapacity that should disqualify citizens from participation in the English polity. The iron-clad dissenter—whose encasement appears, in part, through the eyes of beholders like Parker—wanders through Restoration society as a resident alien.

Long before Macpherson traced the possessive individual to the seventeenth century, nonconformists recorded a painful process of privatization. The tender consciences traditionally seen behind the sharply delineated borders of selfhood found those borders erected from without. Eighteenth-century dissenters registered the public “incapacity” imposed on them in the astonishing terms of murder. “None will deny,” one dissenter wrote in 1703, “but a total Incapacity to serve his...Country is a Mark of high Infamy, so that next to the Loss of life it seems the heaviest Punishment...”¹⁰ The modern reader strains to understand such statements as anything but hyperbole, but dissenters, acutely aware of a historical dislocation, grieved their exile from the public sphere. “It is hard to imagine,” a contemporary in the House of Lords wrote, “any Offence, that is not capital, [that] can deserve” so “great a Penalty [as Incapacity].”¹¹ The imposition of privacy on the “armored” liberal subject appeared to dissenters as an attempt on public life; they had not been prepared for the “Mark of publick Infamy” that made them “Persons unfit [in the eyes of the law] for a publick Trust.”¹² To read dissenters’ writing in this period is to observe the traumatic separation of political rights from obligations, as nonconformists faced down a government that barred them from public service—“depriv[ing] us,” Daniel Defoe wrote, “of our Birth-right, as *Englishmen*.”¹³ It was this exclusion from public life—the enforcement of privacy—that has been excluded in turn from genealogies of modern

individualism and the novel. The construction of an interiorized subject, as public debates suggested long ago, appeared less as a stealthy means of domestication than an obvious political constraint. As this present chapter traces the tender conscience through the works of Locke and Defoe, it reads with an eye to the early novel's engagements with politically enforced invisibility.

* * *

The specter of the untrustworthy citizen—that “ungovernable” tender conscience—casts a long shadow, then, over the period in which Locke worked on his *Two Treatises*. Locke's involvement with the Quakers and other nonconformists offers one context for understanding his work on the origins and ends of civil government. Within the activist circles of Locke's acquaintance, his political philosophy could only be taken to succeed if it either incorporated or otherwise accommodated the tender conscience that seemed to many a threat to the institutions of church and state.

Locke's patron, the Earl of Shaftesbury, had fallen under suspicion in 1681 for an armed conspiracy against Charles II. The king called for his death. Intent on weakening the juries prone to obstructing his pursuit of political enemies, the king urged for the dismissal of dissenting jurors. Locke took to writing, worried that dissenters could be excluded from juries for refusing the sacraments of the Church of England; existing law, after all, already barred them from public office on these very grounds.¹⁴ Influenced, perhaps, by the Puritanism of his upbringing, Locke offers in an unpublished tract the following defense of dissenters and their right to jury duty:

Dissent is in such things wherein wise and good men have heretofore differed & doe & will always herein more or lesse differ. And the dissent being soe much against the profit & secular interest of the Dissenters it can not be presumed to proceed from any thing but impulse of conscience: wherein although they may erre & therefor be or be thought weake: yet there can be noe reason to conclude them wicked, but rather that they feare & therefor will keepe their Oaths lawfully administred and taken. Besides that ~~the~~ Dissenters cease not thereby to be free men of England but are equally with others capeable of the same priviledges & lyable to the same burthens & services & the law makes noe such destinction nor is there any reason for it.¹⁵

Locke takes up the standard defense from earlier theorists of the tender conscience: conscientious weakness should not be taken as the wickedness of insubordination, even when errancy is involved. Opponents of this view (and in 1681, the crown most of all) would have had every reason to contend that it *is* wickedness to invoke the tender conscience to kill one king and plot the takedown of another.

In a posthumously published work, Locke would praise theology as the “science... incomparably above all the rest,” and urge readers to “penetrate into those infinite depths filled with treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”¹⁶ In his defense of dissent, however, Locke does not delve into the theological subfield of casuistry. This science of the conscience offered one method for determining points of lawful separation from the established church, and Locke might well have considered himself qualified to identify the valid and invalid reasons for separation. With characteristic epistemological modesty, however, Locke frames dissent instead as a perpetual, open-ended presence in church and state (“wise and good men have heretofore differed & doe & will always herein more or less differ”). I will return later to Locke's embrace of a permanent state of dissent, but for now, it will suffice to note three key directions outlined

here. First, Locke sets limits on expressions of tenderness by insisting, against Thomas Hobbes and others, on the dissenter's exemplary fidelity. The tender conscience converts through Locke's writing into the most ideal subject of the social contract—the subject who keeps his promises. Against those who suspected the discourse of tender conscience, seeing in it a rhetorical smokescreen for self-interest, Locke invokes the ongoing test of hardship. Because dissent was at that time “soe much against the profit & secular interest of the Dissenters,” Locke explains, “it can not be presumed to proceed from any thing but impulse of conscience.” Locke does not seek to remove dissenters' hardships; these difficulties provide necessary evidence of conscientious tenderness. Despite this obvious inequality before the law, Locke insists on legal impartiality and the fiction of equality to ensure the minimal inclusion of dissenters in the public sphere.

It was far from obvious in the 1680s that dissenters were, as Locke contended, “free men of England.” In 1682, Bristol prisons held eighty-five Quakers and fifty-two Presbyterians; three years later, English prisons held 1,500 Quakers alone. Among imprisoned dissenters, more than a hundred died in the bitterly cold winter of 1683-84. In the two decades after Restoration, almost 11,000 Quakers were imprisoned at some point.¹⁷ For many readers, the “den” from which John Bunyan writes *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) was no allegory. “My soul chuseth strangling rather than life; and the Grave is more easie for me than this Dungeon,” Christian cries in despair.¹⁸ Intellectual historians tend to place Locke in conversation with later philosophers like George Berkeley and David Hume, but Locke lived as a contemporary of Bunyan, and in 1683 was seeking sanctuary in the same divided nation. England, at this historical junction, was a nation that did not know what to do with either of them.

Following Shaftesbury's death and the Rye House plot in 1683, Locke was a marked man and guilty by association.¹⁹ Even after his escape to the Netherlands, a warrant sent to the Dutch authorities followed, including his name among those of other political exiles to be arrested. Locke thus worked on both his *Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* and the *Epistola de Tolerantia* while hiding abroad, finally finding his way to Rotterdam. For two years, Locke took shelter in the home of Benjamin Furly, a Colchester-born émigré who had left in the 1660s; the two men would remain lifelong friends. For over three decades, Furly hosted regular Quaker meetings in his Rotterdam home.²⁰ Though far from England, the nation's troubles perhaps seemed nowhere closer than in this refuge: Locke would have learned that Furly's father, a first-generation Quaker, had been imprisoned back in England, and that Furly's brother, John, had been imprisoned as well in the 1660s for hosting Quaker meetings. Authorities confiscated goods from Furly's brother well beyond the value of outstanding fines, claiming “brass kettles, bars of iron, fire racks and leather-back stools”; in 1685, John Furly was still being fined repeatedly for preaching.²¹ Locke himself remained attentive to the government's habit of seizing dissenters' property, buying up Quaker accounts of the harsh “distraining” measures—those legal actions of “distress”—then being carried out across England.²²

How could a serial offender like John Furly ever produce proof of loyalty to the state? Locke's solution turns this question on its head, laying out instead the principles of governance acceptable to such offenders. Various expressions of allegiance (as in the case of dissenting jurors mentioned earlier) had become conditions for political obligation, and the privilege of public service had been used as a wedge to deny dissenters full citizenship. By limiting the state to the much narrower role of property protection, Locke seeks to solve the problem of loyalty that troubled his contemporaries. From the outset, in other words, Locke did not aim to dissolve the civic bonds of political obligation. If anything, a principal imaginative weakness of Lockean

thought is its failure to envision a future in which citizens do not long, as Locke and his friends did, for the distinction of public-spirited action. Locke effectively shifts the burden of proof from the citizen to the state: one need not probe and sort through tests, oaths, or other means to verify or secure allegiance. In Locke's scheme, any citizen who strives to make a living and acquire the goods necessary for survival deserves the protection of the larger community. From this perspective, the diminished role of the state in Lockean thought and its minimal obligations do not signal the apotheosis of the possessive individual. This political philosophy reflects instead the linked concessions designed to ensure the conscience's persistent vulnerability.

The political ideas of the *Second Treatise*, then, are of a piece with Locke's writings on toleration, for the debate over the tender conscience is also a debate about private property. Locke's lengthy exchanges on toleration speak to his protracted engagement with the plight of dissenters.²³ Readers of these debates expecting to find embattled dogmatists flailing against enlightened skeptics will be disappointed; the moderate tone of these dialogues reveals large tracts of shared discursive ground. The clergyman Jonas Proast calmly explains his support for the gently-named policy of "discouragement": the state has the duty to discourage dissenters, or those clinging to wrong belief out of habit, from persisting in benighted ways. Proast challenges Locke to come up with a more enlightened method for guiding fellow travelers:

[When men] grow so opinionative and so stiff in their Prejudices...[w]hat means is there left (besides the Grace of God) to reduce those of them that are got into a wrong Way, but to lay Thorns and Briars in it?...[W]hat humane method can be used, to bring them to act like Men...and to make a wiser and more rational Choice, but that of laying such Penalties upon them...? (*The Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration*, 10-11)

To some extent, Proast picks up where Parker left off: tender consciences are stiff and more hardened than others, so they require answerably harsh treatment. They must be encouraged out of brutish habits of mind to "act like men." But Proast is elegant where Parker is splenetic, glancing lightly over the more outrageous insinuations to dwell on the state's tolerant means of cultivating conformity. He gives a nod to Locke's allegory of pilgrimage, in which Protestants sojourn together despite variations in outward attire. The state should not impose in a high-handed way; on this, Proast is in full agreement. So it is a good thing, he explains, that the state does no more than hedge up byways and dead-ends that would endanger pilgrims. The promotion of conformity, Proast suggests, is about as controversial as routine highway maintenance. Against Locke's comparatively negative conception of the state's role in advancing Christian liberty, Proast advocates a positive one; political power should be exerted to create conditions for spiritual flourishing.

That Proast and fellow clergymen could defend the doctrine of "thorns and briars" in 1690, the period of Whig ascendancy, suggests even greater dangers to come as Tory inclinations prevailed under Queen Anne in 1702. Before Parliament, Anne deftly divided dissenter from rights-bearing citizen in the following way:

I hope such of them as have the Misfortune to dissent from the Church of *England*, will rest secure and satisfy'd in the Act of *Toleration*, which I am restored to maintain: And that all those who have the Happiness and Advantage to be of the Church of England will consider...that I shall always make it my own particular Care, to encourage and maintain this Church...and every the least Member of it, in all their just Rights and Privileges.²⁴

Anne follows the doctrine that High Church clergy like Parker and Proast had presented as a matter of national security. In keeping with the twin springs of enlightened self-interest, the state doles out “happiness” and “misfortune,” respectively, to conformist and nonconformist to preserve its sovereignty. The stakes are low, from one perspective: the queen’s language does not suggest that anyone’s soul is in danger. Dissenters simply have the “Misfortune” of being too dull to recognize their own self-interest and the happiness that inheres in the Church of England.

Locke and other advocates of dissent recognized this tendency to dismiss the nonconformist’s plight as self-inflicted misfortune. He observed society’s passionate objections to nonconformity, and could not but acknowledge the fears that excluded dissenters from public life. To prevent these fears from being further institutionalized, the *Second Treatise* and Locke’s writings on toleration oppose state sanctions against nonconformity. But Locke was not overly troubled by less formal, social modes of discrimination. Those critics who have detected in liberalism’s commitment to formal equality an unconscionable neglect of existing inequality are not wrong. Locke’s political thought quite intentionally incorporates informal discrimination as a check and ongoing test of hardship: it is one means of ensuring that the tender conscience stays tender.

To the extent that Lockean liberalism provides for the separation of church and state, it has often been seen as erecting a fundamental bulwark against the onslaughts of conscience—the sectarian interests that encroach on broader notions of the common good. But Locke’s efforts to preserve dissent deserve at least as much attention, for it works the other way as well: the conscience in Locke’s time had to be shielded from the state. Locke offers a concession to those like Parker and Proast who cannot bear the thought of letting dissenters anywhere near the reins of governance. As he does so, however, he evinces an abiding concern with preserving dissent as a viable religious and sociopolitical position apart from the powerful incentives that sought its dissolution. For the queen’s pledge of “Happiness and Advantage” to those conformists worked hand-in-glove with the discouraging “thorns and briars” doctrine to deter dissenters. Locke saw that the state and its promises of support and security could tip the uneasy scales of conscience’s balance. He suspects that there are more complacent subjects in

the National Church...who little consider or concern themselves about Religion, than [compared to] any Congregation of Dissenters. For Conscience, or the Care of their Souls, being once laid aside, *Interest*, of course, leads Men into that Society, where the Protection and Countenance of the Government, and hopes of Preferment, bid fairest to all their remaining Desires.²⁵

Locke has often been read as a one-sided theorist of the unconstrained will, but his work on toleration reveals a thinker who is very much concerned about the relations of consensual dependence that constitute the will.

Lockean liberalism makes its ideal citizen the subject of conscientious weakness—one willing to forego the advantages of state support. In the *Two Treatises*, Locke had framed the departure from patriarchal governance as a departure from history, first attacking Robert Filmer’s history of kingship before moving onto a hypothetical account of the state of nature. Locke redirects the reader from Filmer’s history to more pristinely theoretical grounds. As with his involvement in the Exclusion Crisis, though, Locke’s thought experiment is heavily informed by the distinctive history of the English Reformation. As long as English monarchs had served as

defenders of the faith, Locke observes, the church had altered according to their changeable inclinations. As he noted in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*,

How the Church was under ...[pre-modern] Emperors is very well known. Or if those things be too remote, our modern *English* History affords us fresh Examples, in the Reigns of *Henry* the 8th, *Edward* the 6th, *Mary*, and *Elizabeth*, how easily and smoothly the Clergy changed their Decrees, their Articles of Faith, their Forms of Worship, every thing, according to the inclination of those Kings and Queens. Yet were those Kings and Queens of such different minds, in point of Religion...that no man in his Wits...will presume to say that any sincere and upright Worshipper of God could, with a safe Conscience, obey their several decrees.²⁶

To secure the conscience from the errant will of the monarch, Locke decouples religious concerns and state authority. In a counterintuitive way, this curbing of state power is designed to keep subjects vulnerable—to keep their consciences from being swayed by the inclinations of successive regimes.

Locke's vision of the unchurched state, as he would argue, is backward-looking, inspired by the purity of the primitive church. When he casts about for a historical model in his toleration letters, he turns not to the theocracies of ancient Israel or the recent protectorate, but to the age of Rome. When Christianity consisted of no more than a loose, underground movement within a powerful empire, he writes,

it was then better *preserv'd, more widely propagated* (in proportion) *and render'd more fruitful in the Lives of its Professors*, than ever since; tho then Jews and Pagans were tolerated, and more than tolerated, by the Governments of those places where it grew up. I hope you do not imagine the Christian Religion has lost any of its first Beauty, Force, or Reasonableness, by having been almost 2000 Years in the World; that you should fear it should be less able now to shift for it self, without the help of Force. I doubt not but you look upon it still to be *the Power and Wisdom of God for our Salvation*; and therefore cannot suspect it less capable to prevail now...than it did in the first Ages of the Church, when poor contemptible Men, without Authority, or the countenance of Authority, had alone the care of it. (*A Second Letter*, 3)

No state financial support, public honors, or formally-approved titles: the “poor contemptible” position that Locke imagines preserves the vulnerability required for conscientious tenderness. That vulnerability, of course, was hardly theoretical in Locke's day, and given the hardships of dissenters, Locke can stand accused of offering little better than a lightly-pruned version of the “thorns and briars” doctrine. The crucial theoretical distinction that Locke establishes in favor of dissenters, however, is the withdrawal or withholding of state support over and against the active pursuit of discriminatory measures. What became a vastly expanded no-man's land of neutrality was born of a seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the state and those presumed to be hostile to it.

The Lockean arrangement represents a compromise that sets aside debates over who does or does not deserve that distinguished title of “tender conscience.” The tender conscience, instead, is made to stand in for everyone. Under an earlier regime, the weak and tender were particularly deserving of accommodation; under the new regime, every imagined subject is “poor

and contemptible” and in need of accommodation. The rule that applied to the most notable tender consciences of the 1640s is distributed across the population: apart from glaring exceptions, Lockean subjects are accepted into a larger collective on the condition that they are not publicly and officially acknowledged as being in the right. They can, however, all be tender.

II. Latitudinarians, Quakers, and the Pursuit of Unhappiness

“Religion conduceth to the happiness of this life; and that both in respect to the inward and outward man....It brings peace and pleasure to our minds.”²⁷ – Archbishop Tillotson

“Happiness. Happiness is a continuation of content without any molestation. Very imperfect in this world. No body happy here certain.”²⁸ –John Locke

Locke’s political structure treats tender consciences as ideal subjects, and elevates the preservation of apparently minor but deep-seated differences among them into a core principle of governance. In the early eighteenth century, the lasting influence of this model was hardly a foregone conclusion. As we have seen, another position articulated from Parker to Queen Anne privileged a competing set of affective and political ideals: in this model, peace and happiness go hand in hand. Locke, to be sure, made profuse use of the discourse of happiness and its attendant terms of peace, ease, and pleasure. And he made no secret of his sympathies for the broad-minded “Latitude-Men,” the learned divines who threw their weight behind this discourse. But his emphases differ—Locke is as likely to speak about the “toyl, anxiety, and frailties of this Mortal Life” as happiness, and even the *Essay*’s propulsive drive, its “unease,” comes nearer to conscientious discomfort than anything resembling *eudaimonia*.²⁹ In its embrace of inevitable difference and what John Dunn has described as the Puritan duty of “endless aspiration,” Lockean thought does not entirely resonate with the keynotes of happiness and peace, even when these latter terms are assimilated to a Whiggish liberalism.³⁰

In hindsight, it is clear that the political history of happiness abuts directly on the political history of the tender conscience. Following the Restoration, the latter was increasingly pressed to reinvent itself within, and as, the former. During the Civil War years, the accommodation of the tender conscience—that is, the quest for inclusion without conformity or agreement—had proved a tense affair that required careful acts of readjustment. Whatever the virtues of accommodation, ease was not one of them. The queen’s alluring promise of “happiness and advantage” responds to this difficulty, and further rides the swelling discourse of interest.³¹ As Locke foresaw, this peace-making strategy involved demonstrating to dissenters their real self-interest. Given compelling advantages and the right offers of happiness, dissent might conceivably die out in a surge of support for the crown and traditional pillars of authority.

The promise of temporal as well as spiritual happiness took on added urgency among exponents of natural religion. As Restoration divines faced down the materialism of Thomas Hobbes and the religious bloodletting to which it responded, they sought to articulate a reasonable faith within which sectarian conflict had no place. For those like John Wilkins and the future Archbishop Tillotson, natural religion offered a source of renewal.³² Like natural law, it promised a return to those first principles that preceded those of revealed religion or particular instantiations of positive law. The most astute thinker in the natural law tradition had shown how its resources could be deployed in both astonishingly radical and deeply conservative ways.

Hobbes' account of men driven, above all, by fearful motives of self-preservation haunted eighteenth-century philosophers of religion. His grim candor about self-interest, to begin with, seemed to explain the destructive drive that had torn three kingdoms apart.³³ To those weary of tenderness talk, Hobbes' assessment leveled the field in an unexpected way: all are selfish, none are tender. The Civil War could not have been fought by consciences seeking mutual accommodation, for it had ended in self-seeking sectarianism. As an explanatory category and rationale for action, self-interest would only grow in importance, edging out others on its way to describing—and legitimating—social behavior.

Though the Latitudinarians were not a particularly doctrinaire or homogeneous group of thinkers, notable figures among them took the lead in espousing natural religion. Men like Wilkins and Tillotson recognized its potential for preserving Hobbes' insights without his skepticism. Self-preservation remains a natural drive, but it's not immoral or even amoral. When duly uplifted, the instinct for self-preservation drives individuals to seek eternal happiness, which parts ways, significantly enough, from conscientious tenderness. Through its reasonable reconstitution under natural religion, self-interest thus comes to be united with happiness. Conceived of as an affective state, this happiness is eminently suited to the growing pursuit of self-interest. Albert O. Hirschman has suggested that the pursuit of self-interest supplants aristocratic ideals that sanctioned more extreme and violently inclined passions (the pursuit of glory and honor, for example).³⁴ One could do worse than name happiness as the reflective, middling passion that accords with self-interest and its characteristic compact. The affectively-drenched contract, as Victoria Kahn has shown, converses with such passions as love and fear in the seventeenth century, and yet happiness would seem to offer a fallback—the meeting point or equilibrium—through which the contract appears dispassionate.³⁵ Those legally-binding stipulations ensuring moderate forms of happiness, as in private contentment or satisfaction, are presumably easier to enforce than ones that specify in advance the terms for securing public dignity or immortal glory.

As in any discussion of happiness, today's critic runs the risk of conflating *eudaemonia*, the condition of flourishing determined by objectively established criteria, with subjectivist notions of happiness that render it a transitory feeling. Yet that blending and blurring by which the philosophical concept shades into felt experience gets its start here, as Restoration divines highlight the temporal as well as spiritual advantages of self-interest properly pursued.³⁶ "Religion," as Tillotson explained, "tends to the ease and pleasure, the peace and tranquility of our minds..."³⁷ Restoration divines like Wilkins and Tillotson share with the author of *Leviathan* a sense that dissenters helped usher in a fractured, hostile world, yet unlike Hobbes, they would labor to shift the blame off of religion as a whole: in its pure, natural form, they contended, religion promises peace and happiness. What can be seen as a secularizing movement, as the pursuit of a tender conscience turns into the pursuit of happiness, might be understood instead as an internal struggle within Restoration Christianity to draw dissenters back into the fold. Some, like Anne, leaned less on the moral precepts of natural religion and more heavily on the guidance of the established church. Both Latitudinarians and their more firmly Church of England counterparts, however, sought to heal rifts within the spiritual community by obviating the need for dissent.

Wilkins, for this reason, does not sound significantly different from Anne when he proclaims that "Religion conduces to the happiness of the outward man, in respect of Liberty, Safety, and Quiet..."³⁸ Wilkins is not being disingenuous when he passes over dissenters, for whom religion hardly guarantees liberty or safety; he takes as his more pressing task the defense

of religion as a whole. The same is true of the future archbishop. Locke respected Tillotson's judgment and recommended him to readers as a consummate prose stylist. Yet their disparate tasks led them to view the link between religion and temporal happiness in rather different ways. "To do good," Tillotson exhorted, "is the most pleasant enjoyment in the world. It is natural; and whatever is so is delightful."³⁹ Tillotson insists, as libertines and freethinkers would not, that virtuous behavior is as natural as self-preservation.

As nature thus becomes synonymous with the easy and delightfully virtuous, the instinctual flinch of conscience, and political dissatisfaction more broadly, look increasingly unnatural. At the outset, however, this promotion of happiness proved controversial, for the prestige of the tender conscience had been tarnished without being altogether forgotten. Thus Wilkins, for example, acknowledges the difficulty of preaching happiness to dissenters, and takes time to address the scriptural objection that "*whoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution...[and that] the world should hate them.*"⁴⁰ Happiness was no handmaid to godliness, as far as the apostle Paul was concerned. To this objection Wilkins advances an interpretation of current events. Dissenters cannot invoke this passage because persecution is not taking place. The hardships they face cannot be attributed to repressive authority, for

where the true Religion is publickly professed and encouraged, when *Kings are nursing fathers, and Queens nursing mothers* to the Church; ...in such times and places, the profession of Religion will be so far from hindering, that it will rather promote a mans secular advantage.⁴¹

Because of his glowing appraisal of the established church, Wilkins can forge a direct link between religion and secular advantage. In such a supportive environment, spiritual progress might as well be measured by an individual's standing with state authorities. Thinkers inclined towards toleration who, with Wilkins and Tillotson, were more interested in the cause of virtue than doctrinal niceties, could nonetheless embrace preferment as a reliable means of promoting moral virtue.

As Locke seeks to distance dissent from power, then, he contends not only with defenders of the established church but those often imagined to be his enlightened allies. By binding religion so tightly to temporal happiness, these broad-minded theologians inadvertently helped to criminalize, or at least call into question the moral causes for, dissenters' unhappiness. Locke rejected optimistic assessments of England's religious state, urging Proast, the advocate of "discouragement," to look around him. Discouragement, he remarked with no little contempt, was "a pretty Expression for Undoing, Imprisonment, Banishment, for those have been some of the *Discouragements* given to Dissenters here in *England.*"⁴² Locke refused to make the dissenters' unhappiness testify against them: theirs, he argued, were hardships imposed and not sought.

The hardships imposed on Quakers, especially, were so many that writers had begun compiling them into published catalogues, in some cases adding account-book summaries tallying up the value of "goods seiz'd and taken"—a literal way of calling authorities to account.⁴³ Pamphlets like these continued to be published (in 1704, 1706, 1709) after various toleration measures. The entries that follow are typical of the ones found in Locke's purchased pamphlets, though most were pared down stylistically even further into lists of goods (kettles, tankards and chamber-pots) and their values:

*James Hind of Wellow Tailor for being at...[a Quaker] Meeting was fined 10 s. and had the Bed-clothes taken from off their Beds, insomuch as the Boy about four Years old, the 2d of the 11th Mon. 75. said, Now I must be fain to lie in my Clothes; for we have nothing left to hap us.*⁴⁴

*Mary Todd a poor Widdow, for having a Meeting at her house one Francis Driffield, called a Justice, sent a Warrant to bring her before him, but she being Aged, was not able to ride nor go on foot so far; then he gave order to distrain 20 l. 5 s. on her Goods: The Informers told him, Her Goods were not worth so much Well (said he) take all she hath; which they performed as near as they could, not leaving her a Bed to lie on, taking her very Clothes, though she was but a poor Widdow, Aged, and in Debt.*⁴⁵

What became of Mary Todd's bed or James Hind's blankets? In tight-knit communities, the dissenter's misfortunes seemed directly related to the happiness of loyal subjects—especially those informers rewarded for incriminating others.

In the absence of a professional police force, magistrates collaborated with watchful informers, and further called on other neighbors to do the heavy lifting. Writers noted the strain of such proceedings on communities and their conceptions of neighborliness. As a 1670 pamphlet attributed to Bunyan noted, officials gathering in Bedford to confiscate a citizen's goods encountered

a great number of all sorts of persons... expressing (by turns) their indignation against him [the leading churchwarden], for attempting this against [one]...whom the whole Town knew to be a just and harmless man; and the common sort of people covertly fixing a Calves tayl [*sic*] to [the churchwarden's] back, and deriding him with shouts and hollows, he departed without taking any distress there; and advanced with other Officers to [a grocer's shop to fine him for his wife's attendance at a nonconformist meeting], where none of the Officers would distreyn but [the churchwarden], who took a Brass Kettle, but when he had brought it to the street-door, none of the Officers would carry it away; neither could he hire any to do it in two hours time, though he offered money to such needy persons among the company as wanted bread; At last he got a youth for six-pence to carry the Kettle less way than a stones-throw, to an Inn-yard...[but] the Inn-keeper would not suffer the Kettle to be brought into his Yard; and so his men set it out in the middle of the street, None regarding it...⁴⁶

The imposition of distress required the cooperation of the community. Many members refused. When a Cambridgeshire justice fined “one Man (no *Quaker*)...for refusing to help to carry away” the property of Mr. Adams, a known Quaker, the man borrowed money to pay the fine instead of committing what he understood to be a grave sin. In his report of this case, William Penn notes that “shortly after the poor Man dying, on his Death-Bed he much rejoiced, ‘*That he had no Hand in taking away his Neighbour Adams his Goods.*’”⁴⁷

The circulation of such reports was taken to threaten peace and union, especially during the Exclusion Crisis. In *The Mischief of Separation* (1680), a sermon delivered before the Lord Mayor of London, another future bishop, Edward Stillingfleet, advised dissenters to join with the established church, or barring that, to avoid “complaining of their hardships and Persecutions; as though no People had suffered so much since the days of Dioclesian.” It was unchristian

behavior, Stillingfleet explained, “to make such noise and outcries of their sufferings so much, when they would have been rather thankful that they suffered no more.” By publishing their experiences, nonconformists were sowing the seeds of dissension and undermining the authority of church and crown. “Is this the way to *Peace*,” Stillingfleet asked, “to represent their case still to the world in an exasperating and provoking manner?” (*Mischief*, 54). Nonconformists, as Stillingfleet suggests, should have treated their discontent as dirty laundry, an internal matter concealed from political dissidents and the enemies of religion. The public nature of these appeals, then, poses a problem; so, too, does the style of address. Much has been said of the nonconformists’ plain style, but Stillingfleet’s comments suggest how account-book eloquence was sometimes all that remained for those from whom more demonstrative rhetoric read as provocation.

Stillingfleet, who had been known two decades before as the eirenic author of the aptly named *Irenicum*, was met with the outrage of disappointed dissenters. Among those who responded to his charge of “mischief,” including the Independent John Owen and the broadly nonconformist Richard Baxter, Stillingfleet’s call for silence clearly hit a nerve. Owen describes in pounding anaphora the plight of dissenters who had not chosen the path of least resistance:

After so many of them have died in common Gaols, so many have endured long Imprisonments...., so many driven from their habitations into a wandring condition...so many...reduced unto Want and Penury....After all their perpetual Fears and Dangers.... they think it hard they should be complained of for complaining, by them who are at Ease. (*Brief Vindication*, 54-55)

Owen’s repetitions simulate the predictable rhythms of the state’s supposedly uncommon operations against dissenters. Baxter, for his part, took seriously Stillingfleet’s charge that the public circulation of government misdeeds could be considered ingratitude and the sin of rebellion. “Nature,” he writes poignantly, in a plea to the advocates of natural religion, “maketh it lawful to feel when one is hurt, and to confess that feeling” (*Answer*, 93). Baxter defends the dissenters’ public accounts by relating them to the familiar form of the spiritual autobiography, though these narratives of suffering are not the confessions of unlawful action that Stillingfleet might have preferred. They are confessions of feeling, of the capacity to be susceptible to politically-enforced unhappiness.

Dissenters had produced their accounts according to acceptable canons of evidence—grounded in autoptic authority, bristling with circumstantial particulars—and yet, these contributions to public discussion were treated as impertinent and even scandalous. This apparent eruption of privacy into publicity, which Stillingfleet took to be so transgressive, readily draws accusations of excessive self-interest: dissenters were confusing personal losses with public affairs. In a growing double bind, however, the call for silence reinforces the dissenters’ intolerable solipsism. The elevation of experience into publicly acceptable fact was being contested at precisely the moment when Locke took to writing the *Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*. “It is no sin to know History,” Baxter contended, “much less Publick matter of present fact, and least of all, that which we see and feel. Is it a sin to know when a man is in prison, or when his goods or books are distrained...?”⁴⁸ The foundations of fact, which meant so much to Locke’s dissenting readers, were not ones that they had the obvious authority to lay down. They were aware of a present exclusion, but some were conscious of a future one as well. As Baxter realized, dissenters were being written out of the history of their own times. “If

the matter of fact be not truly stated,” the usually even-tempered writer concluded, “the matter of *right* cannot be well determined. I hate false history.”⁴⁹

III. The Impressions of Lockean Epistemology

“He that would seriously set upon the Search of Truth, ought in the first Place to prepare his Mind with a Love of it.”

—John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (IV.19.1)

As Locke attempts to lay anew the foundations of epistemology, the section in Book IV, “Of Enthusiasm,” hints at the urgency of his call for a more rigorously referential use of language. His primary aim is not, as retrospective assessments might suggest, to establish the professionalized sciences of the nineteenth century—he really is concerned, as John Dunn and John Yolton suggested long ago, with right belief and the bounds of spiritual knowledge, matters of salvation that unfold into a long eternity.⁵⁰ And his proximity to the Quakers makes them a prime target for correction. Locke is frustrated by what he sees as Quakers’ susceptibility to metaphor, their failure to grasp how thoroughly they’ve allowed a figure of speech to structure experience and action: “they see the Light infused into their Understandings, and cannot be mistaken; ‘tis clear and visible there; like the Light of bright Sunshine.... This Light from Heaven is strong, clear, and pure, and carries its own Demonstration with it...”⁵¹ This light had seemed to shine with especially “strong, clear and pure” force in Locke’s youth, when groups like the Levellers and Diggers aired unprecedented notions such as the institution of universal male suffrage and the abolition of private property. These were visionaries—subjects whose inner promptings led them to reimagine society, as well as themselves, in new and even messianic ways.

In an infamous case that marks the outer limits of this “inner light,” the Quaker James Nayler re-enacted Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, riding into Bristol on Palm Sunday. The 24-year-old Locke attended Nayler’s trial for blasphemy. One can almost discern in the *Essay’s* denunciation of the Quaker tendency to substitute metaphor for argument Nayler’s enigmatic utterances: “This is the way of talking of these Men: they are sure, because they are sure....[W]hen what they say [about the inner light] is strip’d of the Metaphor of seeing and feeling, this is all it amounts to: and yet these Similes so impose on them, that they serve them for certainty in themselves...” (IV.19.8-9). The Quakers’ problem, Locke seems at first to suggest, is figurative language in and of itself. Without recourse to the metaphor of “inner light,” Quakers like Nayler would be forced to justify their actions on the basis of more widely shared touchstones of truth or accessible, external points of reference. But Locke concerns himself with the Quakers’ metaphor in part because of its appeal to the physical senses. If empiricism requires sight and feeling to disclose knowledge in a reliable way, the particular figures of speech that chip away at sense certainties must be addressed. The Quakers, Locke recognizes, have collapsed the figurative into the literal; they have effectively refused the resources of metaphor and imposed the certainties of one realm onto those of another.

To read figurative language in an excessively literal way, after all, is to deny the knowledge it discloses, and to suppose that it should only ever point to the discrete, sharply focused percepts of a bounded experiential plane. Nayler brings this method of reading to its

shocking but logical conclusion: as the simile slips, the Christian, who only aspires to be Christ-like, edges further and further towards literal equivalence.⁵² As the following section will suggest, Locke's discomfort with the Quakers' metaphor, when read alongside his own carefully chosen ones, suggests that figurative language itself is not the problem. It is the unexamined metaphor that is not worth using. As a mode of thought in motion, figural language requires readers attuned to the hints and inflections that constellate ideas against each other. This attunement is attained through a sustained process of inquiry. The swerves of figurative language between fluid affinity and incommensurability do not lend themselves to the rigidly defined schema that might be demanded from perfected philosophical systems; they require a different kind of attention. Locke's metaphors, as I will show, gesture towards the understanding to be gained when their capacious imprecision presents as something other than the opposite of intellectual rigor.

The Quaker light had met with a corrective metaphor long before the Lockean discussion of figural language. In the wake of the Hobbesian leviathan, the Cambridge Platonists had supplied another kind of light.⁵³ These erudite philosopher-theologians, who led the way for (and in some cases, became) the Latitudinarians who ascended to the highest offices of the Restoration church, sought to soften claims of spiritual illumination. Instead of the Quakers' revelatory flashes, radiating from divine being itself, they portrayed flickering beams emanating from the rationally enlightened observer. "The Platonists," as one of their number explained, "look upon the spirit of man as the *Candle of the Lord* for illuminating and irradiating of objects, and darting more light upon them than it receives from them...[these are] implanted *Ideas*... in the eye of the minde."⁵⁴ As these neo-Platonists soften the inner light, they fix those innate ideas ("implanted Ideas [of the]...mind") that Locke devotes all of the *Essay's* first book to expelling. In the very act of isolating these "inner lights" for reproach, Locke evinces an awareness of metaphor as the necessary grounds of any epistemological model. And he recognizes how existing metaphors propose compelling solutions—perhaps even more satisfying ones than what he has to offer.

Certainly there is a religious solemnity to Locke's task; he, however, selects the essay as the genre in which to complete his work. Early readers described being drawn in by a thinker who knew how to write. The irresistible force of Locke's easy style was noted in the eighteenth century even by a reader disinclined to be sympathetic. Stillingfleet's biographer addresses the erroneous doctrines of the *Essay*, but even as he does so, describes its alluring prose in a way that recognizes literary accomplishment:

This Essay abounding with a Set of new Philosophical Terms, as if some wonderful Improvement of Knowledge was to have been hoped for from it, and being written with a graceful Air, and liveliness of Spirit, and elegancy of Style...and an ingenious improvement of [the author's] Arguments to the best advantage, by a closeness of Reference, and patness of Similitudes and Allusions, no wonder a new Scheme of Notions...set off with these uncommon Advantages, should easily recommend it self to the Affections of the Studious, especially the younger part of them.⁵⁵

The *Essay*, in this reading, enters into the world with all the vivacity of a debutante. Those charmed by Locke's style admired his use of figurative language; the *Essay* hardly appears to these captive readers as a model of the "plain style."

Locke's stated ambivalence towards metaphor makes these marked instances in which he takes recourse to them all the more significant, especially given the powerful currency of the metaphors he positions himself against. At times, as critics have noted, he resorts to depicting the mind in pictorial, imagistic terms that render it passive. These visual figures, however, are increasingly qualified by haptic ones as the text progresses. "*In the reception of simple Ideas, the Understanding is most of all passive,*" he explains. "*Simple Ideas, when offered to the mind, the Understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter when they are imprinted... than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the Images [before it]....*" (II.1.25). As long as the ocular framework dominates, critics from the Romantics onwards have found the Lockean mind rather mechanical. Even persuasive arguments from Ernest Tuveson, Jules David Law, and Joanna Picciotto to show the active role of the Lockean mind in constructing the world it perceives attend to its second-order imaginative, reflective, and recombinatory labors.⁵⁶

My reading of Locke reveals that the primary contact, the initial act of the sensory encounter itself, requires a deliberate participation of the mind—a disposition to sensitivity—and a rather involved exchange of self and world in which both are rendered vulnerable. In a comment that undercuts his earlier claim, Locke explains that sensations can be blocked:

How often may a Man observe in himself, that whilst his Mind is intently employ'd in the contemplation of some Objects; and curiously surveying some *Ideas* that are there, it takes no notice of impressions of sounding Bodies, made upon the Organ of Hearing...? A sufficient impulse there may be on the Organ; but it not reaching the observation of the Mind, there follows no perception... Want of Sensation in this case, is not through any defect in the Organ,...[but] not being taken notice of in the Understanding, and so imprinting no *Idea* in the mind, there follows no sensation. (II.9.4)

It's not just that the understanding, or the self-reflexive mind, cannot muster forth a perception: the sensation doesn't arrive at the mind at all. "Sometimes," he notes later, "the mind fixes it self with so much earnestness on the Contemplation of some Objects. ...[that it] takes no notice of the ordinary Impressions made then on the Senses, which at another Season would produce very sensible Perceptions... it lets them pass almost quite unregarded, as faint shadows, that make no impression" (II.19.3). These shadows return later, but for now, note how the earlier claim is qualified and revised: the mirror there suffers "no alteration": here, a very sensible perception can be reduced at the point of contact to "faint shadows."

The mirror and visual metaphors in all their inadequacy come to be supplanted by ones that figure a model of mind better suited to Locke's epistemology. Long before the Romantic poets did so, Locke decried the impoverished conception of mind as mirror, advancing a haptic model instead:

To think often, and never to retain it so much as one moment, is a very useless sort of thinking; and the Soul, in such a state of thinking, does very little, if at all, excel that of a Looking-glass, which constantly receives variety of Images, or Ideas, but retains none; they disappear and vanish, and there remain no *footsteps* of them... (II.1.15, italics added)

Locke moves to shatter the polished looking-glass, gesturing instead toward something like the undulating path through which ideas track through the mind. These traces recall the Latin

vestigia, but the derivation does not account for their vigorous activity. Underneath Lockean footsteps, the mind enlarges into a landscape that bears pressure—the weight of living, moving beings. These ideas have *habits*, not unlike those of unruly children.

The traces of these footsteps re-emerge eight chapters later, as Locke again insists on the mind's participatory role in sensation. He begins here, though, with the unmarked tablet that remains so if it proves incapable of yielding and stretching to sensations. The conventional image of the *tabula rasa* as a smooth, blank slate proves utterly misleading, for it emerges in Locke's writing as a receptive, moldable material, endlessly formed and reconfigured according to the forceful impress of sensations ("the stamp").⁵⁷ One may find, he writes, that objects

that have more than once offer'd themselves to the Senses, have yet been little taken notice of; the Mind, either heedless, as in Children, or otherwise employ'd, as in men...not setting the stamp deep into itself...In all these cases, Ideas in the Mind quickly fade, and often vanish quite out of the Understanding, *leaving no more footsteps* or remaining Characters of themselves, than Shadows do flying over Fields of Corn; and the Mind is as void of them, as if they had never been there. (II.10.4, italics added)

The obstruction of sensation and the process of ideational decay are deeply concerning to Locke, who wants nothing more than footsteps traversing the mental landscape. The distinction between the visual and the haptic—that is to say, the pressure of existence on the environment—is particularly striking here, as flying shadows contrast with residual marks scattered across the ground. Those prints in the cornfields—left, perhaps, by one pushing through dense rows of vegetation—place in intimate contact living organisms capable of bearing down on as well as sustaining one another, though hardly in proportional ways. These prints might not be noticeable at all if not for their juxtaposition with another passing encounter. Shadows flitting overhead sweep in an almost frictionless way across stalks and soil that, for a moment, become one undifferentiated medium. The text tasks readers with imagining a rare instance in which a body slides easily across the tips of pointed spears. It's precisely the unobtrusive nature of this encounter that makes it unsuitable as a model for the retentive mind; in the Lockean account, the mind must set stamps "deep into itself."

Locke's suspicion of the illusory objects of sight, those faint shadows, registers a historical moment in which, as discussed above, visual metaphors of illumination often seemed to obviate the need for reasoned argument. But of course one need only think back to Plato's cave for an ancient instance in which the terms of light and sight, knowledge and understanding, collapse into each other. In early modern hierarchies of the senses, vision retained a privileged position for its associations with Reason and seemingly disembodied intellection. Its rarefied quality had been taken by medieval thinkers to invite the ascent into immaterial, spiritual realms of contemplation apart from the grosser objects of sense.⁵⁸ Locke's turn, then, to the point of haptic contact stresses an earthbound proximity, the mutual implication and impingement whereby subject and object enter into immediate relation. Knowledge is thus aligned in Lockean epistemology with the traditionally lower sense of touch and feeling—precisely that which threatened to slide into the merely carnal. As Locke demands obtrusive sensations that move, affect, disturb, and touch, ideas start to look very much like other modes of feeling—we can call them passions or affects. "Feeling" describes the conditions of enhanced understanding.⁵⁹

But Locke brings affections and intellection into contact in another way as well: he nurtures an affection for ideas by bringing them to life, granting them an existence sustained by

but independent of the mind. Human dignity is bound up, in his *Essay*, with the preservation of living thoughts:

Characters drawn on Dust, that the first breath of wind effaces...render the Subject as noble, *as the Thoughts of a Soul that perish in thinking*,...[which] once out of sight, are gone for ever, and leave no memory of themselves behind them....If we will examine it, we shall not find, I suppose, the motion of dull and senseless matter, any where in the Universe, made so little use of, and so wholly thrown away. (II.1.15, italics added)

Thoughts, perishable entities that they are, require our earnest efforts to preserve and honor them in memory. These are lively thoughts, begotten by lively sensations that intrude and invite themselves into our minds; knocking, carving, and pushing the mind-stuff into various forms. The very dynamism of ideas serves, for Locke, as a repudiation of the “dull and senseless matter” of mechanistic philosophy. So strong are Locke’s affections in this regard that he writes what can be read as his elegy on a dead idea:

Thus the *Ideas*, as well as Children, of our Youth, often die before us: And our Minds represent to us those Tombs, to which we are approaching; where though the Brass and Marble remain, yet the Inscriptions are effaced by time, and the Imagery moulders away. *The pictures drawn in our minds*...if not sometimes refreshed, vanish and disappear.... (II.10.5)

The footprints that Locke had described earlier seem very much attached to children who need to be minded; it is here that Locke’s footprints most clearly depart from the *vestigia* that might be associated with Lucretian materialism. To lose track of the footprint is not just to be thrown off the scent of an empirical clue—it is, as suggested by Crusoe’s encounter with the metaphor, to be ignorant of, intellectually uncurious, even uncaring towards one’s relations, dead or alive. Our minds thus become memorials erected to preserve the memory of the ideas that die before us.

Locke’s wistfulness about the decay of ideas stresses the labor it requires to preserve them. He imagines a thankless task that reframes ideas of significance. The mind, after all, is not raising public monuments in honor of martial valor, but tombs for dead infants, suggesting all the more the lasting immaturity and fragility of moldering ideas. The inclination to preserve elusive, perishable snatches of everyday life, I would submit, is one that Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson derive from this account of empiricism. The incessant writing on prosaic matters discloses a longing aroused by Locke—who transforms that longing into an ethical imperative as well—to honor the fleeting, barely perceptible experience, which once unnoticed, passes away forever.

Locke later recognized how his insistence on receptivity could invite the indiscriminate accumulation of sense data and trivial particulars. Thus he followed his *Essay* with a posthumously published work, “Of the Conduct of the Understanding” (1706). The philosopher’s first treatment of the understanding needed, in some sense, to be paired more explicitly with a conduct book for the mind. “Particular matters of Fact,” Locke affirms, “are the undoubted Foundations on which our civil and natural Knowledge is built.” Yet he warns against those who for whom tidbits of “information... from accounts of Civil or Natural Historians” never improves into knowledge. As he sees it, the problem is that some readers, on one hand, leap too

conclusions too quickly (“raising Axioms from every particular . . . without a wary Induction”); on the other hand, others make

all they read nothing but History to themselves; but not reflecting on it . . . they are very little improved by all that croud of Particulars, that either pass through, or lodge themselves in their Understandings. They dream on in a constant Course of reading and cramming themselves, but not digesting any thing, it produces nothing but a heap of Crudities.⁶⁰

The *Second Treatise* had famously discussed the problem of private property in terms of eating. At what point, the treatise had asked, does fruit plucked from the commons belong to the person who eats it? For Locke, the admixture of labor converts that which is held in common into private property. He considers successive acts of labor—carrying the fruit home, cooking it, consuming it, digesting it—before returning to the scene of harvest. That initial act of gathering, he contends, marks the first infusion of labor through which the piece of fruit becomes privately held.

It is not every act of labor that reaps a harvest, however. Locke, who has in mind a biblical scene of mass harvest, takes food as the paradigmatic piece of private property in order to establish a principle of limitation. The manna of Exodus—shared food extracted from the commons—is “gathered . . . every morning, every man according to his eating” (Exodus 16:18). The gatherers are instructed to take no more than what they can eat in a day. When industrious hoarders go above and beyond, laying up more than they can immediately use, they are punished, finding the next day their labors spoiled and worm-eaten. The limits of the appetite are thus privileged above the physical capacity to gather beyond those limits, and the perishable properties of this “bread from heaven” thus thwarts fantasies of endless accumulation (Exodus 16:4).⁶¹

In the intellectual commons of Locke’s last essay, readers can gather as they like as well, ingesting indiscriminately without decreasing the portions of others. But the spoilage clause spelled out in this work establishes even more restrictive limits. Certain acts described in the *Second Treatise*, like gathering to excess, do not provide the additive value that renders objects private property. However time-consuming or onerous, tasks that end in waste or spoilage are considered, quite literally, fruitless labor. In Locke’s conduct book, this potential for fruitless labor extends into the succeeding stage of consumption. The voracious consumers to whom Locke refers have expended no shortage of labor in amassing facts through reading and historical research. As Locke notes, however, those among them who continue “in a constant Course of reading and cramming themselves, but not digesting any thing, . . . [produce] nothing but a heap of Crudities.” In his first *Essay*, Locke’s metaphor of impressions had already posited intimate relations between mind and percept. The digestive metaphor and its scatological byproducts further intensify the call for unity: particulars are nothing—and certainly not your own—if not transmuted into nourishing substance. Locke’s denigration of reading “nothing but history” raises questions about the genres suitable to his epistemological project. The Lockean digestion of history—the conversion of external facts and loose particulars into sustenance, one’s own constitutive fibers—begins to look like autobiography, broadly conceived.⁶²

Such a reading of Lockean thought suggests a lively, responsive empiricism unencumbered by the notorious rift between fact and value. The supposed philosopher of “sturdy sense” (or worse, “rank philistinism”) has much to say about the aesthetic foundations of

knowledge.⁶³ And as his dependence on metaphor affirms, even his avowed ambivalence towards it bespeaks a profound grasp of its force. Indeed, Locke makes visible the often unacknowledged metaphorical structures on which empiricism and modern scientific notions of knowledge are erected. The claims of science (or Locke's target, antiquarian history) to truth, fact, and reality, as well as our unreflective preferences for precision and clarity are exposed, in Lockean empiricism, to another question: to whom do these ideas speak? Does the sensation imprint and recreate the mind that yields to receive it? The disposition of knowledge in Locke's account is one that prepares itself to be bent and pressed out of shape; this pliant, receptive mind, in turn, is especially suited to challenge, shift, and reshape the boundaries of socially acceptable knowledge.

IV. Born into Ignorance

We are born ignorant of every thing.

—Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706)

Locke's philosophy was first welcomed into institutions of learning by dissenters, and no wonder, for the *Essay* helped answer the pressing question raised by nonconformists like Baxter: does private or minority experience ever count as knowledge? In 1703, authorities at Oxford warned students against reading Locke's *Essay*, but the work may have been studied as part of the curriculum in at least one dissenting academy well before.⁶⁴ The nonconformist hymnwriter Isaac Watts, in any case, certainly read the *Essay* at Thomas Rowe's academy a full decade earlier. Watts' deep admiration for the philosopher, whom he praised in a 1704 poem as a man of "wondrous Mind," and Britain's very own "Prophet," attests to the guiding role of Locke for dissenters shut out of the universities.⁶⁵

The intellectual leadership of dissent had already suffered a serious blow in 1662, when over 2,000 clergymen were ejected from the Church of England, many left destitute with no obvious means to make a living.⁶⁶ The next generation of dissenters, unable to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, found themselves further barred from Oxford and Cambridge. Those institutions that, for the past two centuries, had served as the training grounds for Puritan luminaries were now inaccessible, and the learned ministers who might supply written defenses as they had in a bygone era were now more likely struggling to make ends meet. It was a time when the extirpation of a leaderless dissenting movement seemed a very real possibility. Despite ongoing threats from authorities, a handful of ejected ministers including Rowe and Charles Morton opened small academies for dissenting students seeking further education.⁶⁷

With few hopes for entry into the learned world at large, these educators redrew the bounds of what counted as knowledge, designing curricula that traced out the Baconian and Lockean lines of experience and experiment. Students like Defoe were exposed to the hands-on learning of the new science at the Newington Green academy of Charles Morton, not only reading Galileo, Newton and Harvey, but conducting experiments inside a laboratory well-stocked with what were then still "rarities"—scientific instruments including an air pump and thermometers.⁶⁸ The everyday language of servants, tradesmen, and women did not obviously belong in the halls of higher education, but Morton purposefully steered his students away from the classical languages. As earlier reformers in another context had, Morton objected to "school learning and their locking up...all science in the Greek and Latin, compelling all their pupils to learn the sciences in those languages or not at all, and to perform all their public exercises in

Latin or Greek.”⁶⁹ Locke had opened up one commons by scrutinizing sense perceptions: a domain of experience that once seemed too common and prosaic to support the loftiest flights of truth soon produced the building blocks for the entire edifice of knowledge. When Morton resists the enclosure of classical languages, he opens up another commons; the common use of English recommends it to further study. Defoe would hear lectures and perform exercises completely in English, and would fondly recall Morton’s weekly elocution classes and the twice-weekly assignments in which students composed letters in their mother tongue.⁷⁰ As dissenters turned their native language at once into medium and subject of academic study (another form, one might say, of dissenting self-regard), they effected the Lockean transformation of shadow to monument. The language, once a translucent medium, receives the memorial of sustained scholarly attention.

When Defoe wrote for the *Review*, his Latin proficiency became an easy target of public mockery. One contemporary snidely remarked that Defoe granted his most well-known character a better education than he himself received.⁷¹ Though Defoe would defend his own erudition as well his tutor’s choice to emphasize English rather than the “learned languages,” he elsewhere wrote unsparingly of the challenges faced by dissenting students, who attempted to learn all they could “without Publick Libraries, without Polite Conversation . . . and, above all, without Time given to finish. . . [their] Studies.”⁷² The author most linked to Puritan industriousness wants nothing more for dissenting students than time for contemplation. Defoe, who would himself turn away from the dissenting ministry for the more lucrative risks of entrepreneurship, portrayed the bleak future of graduates trained for pastoral work. After three short years, students were driven out into a world in which they could expect to be intellectually and physically famished: the would-be preacher, Defoe reports, “is so far from having Money to buy Books, that he wants Money to buy Bread; he has no Time to stay at Home to study, for he must go Abroad to get a Dinner.” He trails among the preachers at Salter’s Hall, “daily plying for a Pulpit.”⁷³

Paula Backscheider has noted that “almost every Dissenter who left a record of 1702 [the year of Queen Anne’s accession] mentioned the sense of threat and the ‘rage’ they felt directed at them.”⁷⁴ The memory of the Civil War, as Defoe recalled in the *Review*, was still alive, and fuelling the vigorous discourse of the public sphere:

Down with the *Whigs*, down with the *Presbyterians*, down with the *Meeting-Houses*, was such an Universal Cry, that nothing else was to be heard. . . . Press, Pulpit, Coffee-house, all the Discourse of the Kingdom, was. . . how the Church should Triumph. . . how ‘41 [the outbreak of Civil War] should now be fully Reveng’d.⁷⁵

For dissenters in Defoe’s milieu, the urbane cosmopolitanism of a coffeehouse—to say nothing of the larger, learned world of the Republic of Letters—often had to be imagined from the outside. To recreate what everyone else could gather from the ebb and flow of polite talk seemed a very lonely, and likely, impossible task.

Lockean empiricism, then, spoke in a timely way to the experience of dissenters: isolated minds struggling under the moral imperative to recreate abstract, social systems of knowledge from the discrete encounters of sense experience. An archetypal scene recurs across Defoe’s novels, as characters who have been intellectually-deprived to an almost comic degree are led into even greater confusion by the sensory encounters that plumb, as it were, the depths of their own ignorance. At sea for the first time, Robinson Crusoe hears the sailors warning each other over repeatedly that the ship is about to founder. The text invokes the verb three times in three

paragraphs before the narrator confesses somewhat sheepishly: “It was my Advantage in one respect, that I did not know what they meant by Founder”—that is, he recalls, “till I enquir'd.”

Sailors rush about the ship to save it, shouting to each other in a general panic, and Crusoe, completely unable to infer meaning from context, makes them stop to define a term for him. Defoe’s determination to withhold from his character the knowledge of the word would be funny if it wasn’t so threatening. For even after the seamen clarify the term, Crusoe remains transfixed by the still unknown word: fifteen minutes after escaping the ship, “we saw her sink,” he recalls, “and then I understood for the first time what was meant by a Ship foundering in the sea” (13). Crusoe zeroes in on the term upon which his fate hangs even as—or rather, because—he recognizes his inability to grasp either its meaning or its spiritual consequences. Defoe, like Locke before him, thinks hard about the uneven weight of various impressions, and the conditions through which sensory stimuli must pass before registering deeply enough to be affecting knowledge or saving knowledge (which for Defoe is often the same thing). He is repeatedly drawn to those moments at the brink of comprehension, when the sense impression that would inform opens instead new chasms of ignorance, and flickering illumination dims into an awareness of the unknown.

Defoe places his characters again and again at the threshold of spiritual as well as resolutely material and social forms of knowledge, which prove nearly as elusive. After the orphaned Colonel Jack’s first stint as a thief, the 15-year-old repeatedly breaks down into tears, for he has no place, and more remarkably, no clue how to hide his hard-earned cash. He has made his first economic transaction, so to speak, and with cash in hand seems prepared to join more complex networks of exchange, but is stymied instead by an even more basic prerequisite for participation in the marketplace: he needs clothes. Blundering into a peddler’s shop, Colonel Jack is elated—“struck...,” he tells us, “with a strange kind of Joy”—when he discovers the existence of pants pockets.⁷⁶ Defoe delivers literature’s most poignant encounter with a pocket, but he also exposes a cruel irony; as a petty thief, Jack *is* a pickpocket (and so the text designates him), but he has never thought of owning a pocket and barely knows that they exist. Defoe’s characters often seem to have stumbled into human society for the very first time. Defoe travesties the precarious forms of financial security available to someone like Jack, but points further to challenges of those with no reliable means of acquiring parcels of knowledge on which social inclusion and survival depends.

For Moll Flanders, the telling moment of ignorance occurs when she is still an eight-year-old foster child. She announces her grand aspirations of becoming a “Gentlewoman,” like the town prostitute who “does not go to Service nor do House-Work.”⁷⁷ Moll occupies the position of the lone and therefore foolhardy empiricist, seizing on the particular case of the prostitute before her and attempting to construct from it the necessarily social notion of gentility. The mayor’s wife and daughters delight over Moll’s charming naivete, but Moll soon discovers that

they meant one Sort of thing, by the Word Gentlewoman, and I meant quite another; for alas, all I understood by being a Gentlewoman, was to be able to Work for myself, and get enough to keep me....whereas they meant to live Great, Rich and High, and I know not what. (12)

On the outskirts of the fashionable world and the mysterious realms of financial independence, Moll struggles to grasp the values and conventions that might render them accessible, if only in the barest conceptual sense. Ignorance and knowledge brush so closely together that they coexist;

the child's very utterance of the word places her on the knife's edge between apprehension and comprehension. She possesses in some measure the penetrating insight associated with the empiricist as she unwittingly contends for the dignity and, indeed, true gentility of the working class: as an innocent observer, she sees through "false" constructions.⁷⁸ But she has no means of perceiving her own discernment, and thus mistakes her insights for shared, social knowledge.

Even as material conditions improve for Defoe's characters, semiotic confusion persists. At the close of Captain Singleton's bloody career as a pirate, he finds himself wealthy. His friend the Quaker William "begin[s] to hanker after home," and urges Singleton to do likewise:

"Well, *William*," said [Singleton], "but now you think you have laid your Preliminary...so home that I should have nothing to say; that is, that when I had got Money enough, it would be natural to think of going Home. But you have not explained what you mean by Home, and there you and I shall differ. Why, Man, I am at Home...I never had any other in my Life time...I can have no Desire of going anywhere for being rich or poor, for I have no where to go."⁷⁹

William cannot hope to drive the point "so home," for nothing in Singleton's experience has taught him about a place which everyone already knows. When Singleton decides to settle and choose a home, he does so as a speculative act, and casts around for those definitions which he seeks to understand for himself, musing that home must be "a Refuge... and a kind of Centre...[a] Place that has a Magnetick Influence upon [one's] Affections..."⁸⁰ Defoe's famously unsentimental characters struggle to produce the socially-acceptable emotions that hold homes and larger collectives together. Behind this callousness, the characters evince a desire to belong, or as in Singleton's case, to at least know what it would feel like to belong.

Singleton's narrative ends with a return to England. He strikes a deal with William, whom he has begun to consider a brother. "Come, Brother *William*," he says, "...if you will agree to two or three Things with me, I'll go Home to *England* with all my Heart" (277). The homecoming Singleton proposes is as far from one as could possibly be imagined. The terms for his return are listed in the very final pages of the text, with no further explanation. Among the conditions that Singleton names, surely one of the strangest is his desire for the two friends to "never speak *English* in public before any body." The two had passed as Armenian merchants during their time in Italy; Singleton now proposes that they remain ambiguously Eastern for the rest of their lives, keeping their flowing robes and publicly conversing only in broken Persian. The English family is reconfigured, too, as a separate society: Singleton marries William's sister, but the siblings conceal themselves from all other family members. Like Defoe's Quaker contemporaries, the three form a society within a society, their distinctive patterns of speech and habits of life keeping them a world apart. Even as Defoe's text looks quietly askance at this conscious estrangement, it betrays, too, a measure of sympathy for these nonconformists. For Defoe, the dissenter's isolated return can only be imagined as the foreigner's homecoming, the perpetual journey of remaining a stranger in one's own country.

V. Sense and Servility

From the Restoration onwards, another type of tenderness had been making inroads to English letters: the refined sensibility associated with French manners, which promised to soften coarse English habits. When Charles II had returned from exile, he and his cavaliers had brought with them the mystique of the Parisian court. Eliza Haywood's *Letters from a Lady of Quality to*

a Cavalier, translated from the French (1721) provides a glimpse into the cultural movement that would rewrite the story of tenderness as an amorous one.⁸¹ When wounded by tenderness, Haywood's gentlemen lay aside the restraint of decorum to pursue, through secret dispatches and other stratagems, the objects of their passions. Their eloquence in love's soft as well as boldly passionate appeals would be celebrated as gallantry—a mark of spirit and good breeding. The British eroticization of tenderness is carried on through sentimental literature and the culture of sensibility by, among others, Laurence Sterne, who has also read his Locke. Sterne perceives the tenderness of Lockean empiricism as well as the erotic sensitivity of what medical practitioners like George Cheyne increasingly conceived of as a nervous body.⁸² Characteristically, Sterne makes light of both kinds of tenderness, playing in *Tristram Shandy* on the wax seal as a bit of sexual innuendo.⁸³

Milton must be counted as one of the earliest and most prescient critics of this trend to eroticize—and thus disarm—tenderness. The classical form of his tragedy, *Samson Agonistes* (1673), allows for an ingenious, anachronistic inversion by which his powerful Gallic neighbors appear as both Philistines and the descendants of imperial Rome. Samson has been captured and his eyes gouged out. As his conscience slowly revives, Samson finds himself willing once more to serve as public defender. But the Philistine giant Harapha who taunts him refuses to fight, turning down the challenge of hand-to-hand combat with an odd joke about Samson's poor hygiene ("thou hast need much washing to be toucht"). His is a comment, of course, about ethnic uncleanness, but the fastidious giant does seem as well to prefer a cleaner duel at arm's length. The era of the brute strongman is over. Samson may find a place as a theatrical sideshow or circus act as he does in the tragedy's closing "festival," but otherwise, his newfound strength makes him appear barbaric and uncouth against Philistines who prefer exchanging satirical blows. Contentious, principled dissent has been made to look, as Milton recognizes, like a lack of good manners. Dalila's temptation thus toys with accusations of rude and brainless brawn. She urges tenderness on her former lover, begging Samson to forgive her betrayal; she would further draw him back into his former weakness—a pleasurable tenderness—by reminding him that

...though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestic ease...⁸⁴

Dalila's very name invites the dalliance, the wanton flirtation that Milton fears as the worst kind of alliance. Still, the final tragedy of Milton's work lies in the sentimental treatments of its hero's death. Instead of wondering whether the final impulses of Samson's conscience need to be constantly carried out, redirected, or altogether renounced, the English Israelites transform his demise into an occasion for luxuriant feeling before eventually forgetting his death altogether:

The Virgins also shall on feastful days
Visit his Tomb with flowers, *only* bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.⁸⁵

At the close of a career in service of English tenderness, Milton warned of a tearful cult that threatened to rewrite the return to public action as a failed marriage plot.

The philosopher of tender empiricism was likewise aware that his life's work could become incomprehensible given shifting conceptions of sensibility. Recognizing the need to situate sentimental tenderness vis-à-vis his own, Locke pointedly redefined the former in his *Essay* as hard-heartedness. He conjures up a scene of someone like Samson at his lowest—"a man passionately in love...[who has nevertheless been] jilted." "Bring a score of witnesses of the falsehood of his mistress," he imagines confidently, "[and the chances are]...ten to one but three kind words of hers shall invalidate all their testimonies" (IV.20.12). No tender lover, this man for Locke exemplifies the way in which "earthly minds, like mud-walls, resist the strongest batteries: And though perhaps sometimes the force of a clear argument may make some impression, yet they nevertheless stand firm, and keep out the enemy truth, that would captivate or disturb them" (IV.20.12).

For Defoe's Lockean characters, tenderness could never be reserved for the exceptional objects of romantic desire, for it grounds every act of understanding. Most notable in one's youth, tenderness manifests beyond that brief period as a sustained, affective disposition to truth that should be cultivated. Defoe, a close reader of Locke, describes it this way:

At a tender age the mind is impressionable...As a Lump of soft Wax...[the soul is] always ready to receive any Impression; but if harden'd, grow callous, and stubborn, and like what we call Sealing-Wax, [it can] obstinately refuse the Impression of the Seal, unless melted, and reduced by the Force of Fire; that is to say, Unless moulded and temper'd to Instruction, by Violence, Length of Time, and abundance of Difficulty.⁸⁶

Defoe grasps the tenderness of Locke's wax metaphor in this way because of its resonance with pulpit warnings against hardheartedness. The wax metaphor had long been invoked by classical thinkers to illustrate the impress of knowledge; it had often been accompanied by sophisticated models of the subsequent encoding of knowledge into *phantasmata*. The medieval thinkers that Mary Carruthers studies further envisioned the memory as a site of writing in which knowledge encoded from the senses could be variously retrieved and reassembled.⁸⁷ Mnemonic techniques of the kind Carruthers discusses decline in complexity among seventeenth-century divines who principally appeal to the wax figure for its implications of direct, reforming pressure. One writer notes that

as the waxe or clay receiveth the print of the seale or mould,...suffering the impression only of the Seale or mould...[W]e have *continually neede to have the stamp of heavenly doctrine* put upon our Soules, because the image or forme of godlinesse which wee have from that doctrine, receives continually decay by our owne negligence...⁸⁸

Such appeals extend a limited analogy of the mind's dependence on the external senses to a comprehensive model of spiritual self-fashioning. Tenderness of heart and conscience could thus be described interchangeably with soft wax—or the sensitive eye: "By how much more tender the heart is, so much more deeply is it ever affected...As waxe receives and retaines that impression, which in the hard clay cannot be seen; or, as the eie feeles that mote, which the skin of the eie-lid could not complain of."⁸⁹ Locke's concern with insufficiently impressed knowledge extends age-old anxieties about the hardened conscience and the inattentive reader of scripture to the entire spectrum of sensory encounters.

I will return to the painful, arduous training that Defoe describes, but for now it is enough to observe that Defoe offers this commentary in a pamphlet about a young man who had been found living alone in Germany's forests. He had been brought over by the English court and exhibited as "Peter the Wild Boy." The court, Defoe argues, should stop exhibiting Peter as a strange curiosity and treat him as someone with a soul capable of retaining ideas. In a call that barely disguises his local concern with the plight of the nation's poorly educated dissenting youth, Defoe publicly charges the government to provide for Peter's education. Critics have recognized how closely Defoe's characters approximate Peter's position: "both Crusoe and Peter the Wild Boy," Maximillian E. Novak observes, "were in a natural state because they were solitaires, entirely outside of society."⁹⁰

Defoe was not alone in casting about for foreign figures to help him articulate the experience of alienation within English society. Observers linked dissenters to indigenous Americans and their tribal communities. Samuel Parker declared his dislike for the "sullen and unsociable Niceness" of dissenters by explaining that "their minds (like savage *Americans*) are as contracted as their Herds."⁹¹ "Their Consciences," he writes, "...make them the rudest and most barbarous people in the World; and...in comparison of them, the most insolent of the Pharisees were Gentlemen, and the most savage of the *Americans* Philosophers."⁹² Locke's comparison is slightly less savage, but in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, he does approach the problem of European dissent by considering indigenous Americans: "For the reason of the thing is equal, both in *America* and *Europe*. And neither Pagans there, nor any Dissenting Christians here, can with any right be deprived of their worldly Goods...nor are any civil Rights to be either changed or violated upon account of Religion in one place more than another."⁹³ The identification of Defoe with Robinson Crusoe is nearly always assumed, but Defoe's readers would have seen in the figure of Friday his double as well. If the twisted kinship of Crusoe and Friday sheds light on fantasies of colonial mastery, it served more immediately to negotiate an inflammatory comparison designed to debase both sides. Dissenters had been associated with indigenous Americans; Defoe responds by embracing the comparison, preferring the company of those abroad to those from his own inhospitable island.

Defoe's satirical defense of dissent, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), landed him first in the pillory and then Newgate. He and fellow dissenters were already laboring under a "dismal Cloud of Incapacity," as Parliament considered whether they should be "judged [as] Persons unfit for a public Trust"—unfit even for such local administrative positions as alderman and bailiff, councilman and scavenger.⁹⁴ When Defoe stood in the pillory at this time, then, the suspicion of criminal behavior fell doubly on him as a private person and a representative of dissent. Nearly three decades later, Alexander Pope would remember Defoe's stint in the pillory well enough to make a joke out of it, linking the new troublemaker to William Prynne, the earless one of the English Revolution ("Earless on high, stood unabash'd Defoe").⁹⁵ It would thus seem to Defoe a miracle to be singled out from the disfiguration of public punishment by Robert Harley, the Speaker of the House, who stepped in to pay his fines and secure his release.⁹⁶ As one who had been delivered from death, Defoe's response to Harley is reminiscent of Friday's obsequious exchanges with Crusoe. Their correspondence, as one recent biographer notes, is "embarrassing":

“I think my Self bound to Own you as the Principall Agent of this Miracle....”

“I Can Not but Profess my Self a Debtor wholly to your Self...”

“Most Earnestly Pray that I May have Some Opportunity Put into my hands by Providence to...Make Some Such Sort of Return as No Man Ever Made.”

“...A Man Ready to Dedicate my Life...”⁹⁷

Even after Harley’s fall and resignation in 1708, Defoe would continue in the same vein: “I Sir Desire to be The Servant of your Worst Dayes...I Entreat you Sir to use me in Any Thing in which I may Serve you.”⁹⁸ Defoe’s troubling depiction of Friday’s servility is also a depiction of his own; he can imagine servility with such pleasure because he has been himself reduced to it through gratitude. From the memory of his own abjection, he writes into existence a Crusoe whom he would willingly serve. The tendency to read Defoe as a mythmaker of liberal autonomy has made it hard to recognize how easily he inhabits the plight of a Friday or Colonel Jack, helplessly seeking the support of well-established figures.

In their oscillation between the extremes of servility and insensitivity, Defoe’s characters span the affective poles to which the British “Americans”—to say nothing of the Americans themselves—have been reduced. Such extremes correspond to the failure of Lockean impressions, for as Locke had noted, excessive softness as well as hardness renders the mind incapable of retaining external impressions. Though Defoe remains discreetly silent about his time in Newgate and its traumatic effects, one can hear through Moll something of what he might have experienced: “I degenerated into stone; I turned first stupid and senseless, then brutish and thoughtless, and at last...I became...naturally pleased and easy with the place.”⁹⁹ As Moll adjusts to the terrors around her, she goes numb to the stimuli around her before losing touch with thought itself. This gradual hardening describes Moll’s Newgate descent as much as it does the calcification of her mind across the entire span of the novel.¹⁰⁰

But it is in *Robinson Crusoe* that Defoe makes his most relentless effort to address the problem of hardness and its spiritual and psychological manifestations. He elsewhere wrote, as we have already seen, that the tablet of the mind once hardened would need to be “moulded and temper’d to Instruction, by Violence, Length of Time, and abundance of Difficulty.”¹⁰¹ Defoe crafts a narrative to fulfill all these criteria, as he forcefully prods the titular character along with the reader across a difficult and lengthy chain of events. Though the title page advertises “Strange Surprising Adventures,” many readers have been surprised instead by the punishing monotony of repetitive sequences: there must be one shipwreck, and then another, and yet another. The reader accompanies Crusoe as he makes first “two large earthen ugly things” for jars, is informed that he makes “little round Pots, flat Dishes, Pitchers, and Pipkins,” and then is forced to watch him make “three very good...Pipkins, and two other Earthen Pots”—strange, surprising adventures, indeed (141-143).

The iterative episodes inflicted on readers by Defoe’s narrative simulate the repetitive pounding, the “tenderizing” process that must mollify Crusoe’s conscience and his unlovely clay analogues from their “Pitch of Hardness” (31).¹⁰² Decades ago, Watt already recognized Defoe’s work in thwarting readers’ expectations, observing that the very tame diversions of Defoe’s island amounted to a “revolutionary departure from the traditional expectations aroused by desert islands from the *Odyssey*” onwards.¹⁰³ It is not simply, however, that Defoe lost his imaginative verve to the imperatives of an emergent capitalism. Readers feeling trapped jump restlessly ahead, ready for the next actually exciting adventure, seeking alongside Crusoe the easy deliverance. The narrative demurs. Defoe, through his reading of Locke, is most concerned with

impressions that deepen into knowledge, and works to wean Crusoe from the diligent collection of sensory stimuli that grants only the relief of distraction. The text thus subjects an unyielding Crusoe to variations of the same encounter until each registers as both part of a pattern and a discretely significant experience. In its break with the guidebook tradition, Defoe's text exemplifies the dovetailing of the epistemology of the new science with experimental religion, supplying its student with an immersive and insistently haptic experience.¹⁰⁴

VI. "Odd Misshapen Ugly Things": Defoe's Deformities

Why doesn't Robinson Crusoe go home after that disastrous first voyage? The narrator mentions an inexplicable drive to seek his own destruction; he also, however, cites a more immediate and less mysterious cause: "Shame" (15). What clinches the decision for Crusoe, at least on the road to London, has less to do with an inclination to wander than his lively visions of humiliation:

As to going Home, Shame opposed the best Motions that offered to my Thoughts; and it immediately occur'd to me how I should be laugh'd at among the Neighbours, and should be asham'd to see, not my Father and Mother only, but even every Body else... (15)

The specter of the crowd—"every Body else"—gets lost when Defoe's text is read as a survivor's tale, but the text is indeed suffused with the presence of potential witnesses. Readers looking beyond the depiction of individuated or fully-realized characters meet with quite a few imagined communities. A cohesive society bound by a form of shared expression, Crusoe's neighbors, for instance, exert force at a distance, rerouting the young man from his return home. What appears in the wake of the realist novel as a lapse in characterization or plenitude—the text's failure to depict any specific neighbors—is descriptive in its own right, as the narrator's acknowledgment of the collective whose tacit influence looms larger than the sum of individual parts.

On the island, the text strips Crusoe of material necessities but leaves intact the mental habits of social existence. Long after his exile from English society, Crusoe recreates it imaginatively as a social site echoing with laughter. Wandering about in makeshift clothing, Crusoe muses that

had any one in *England* been to meet such a Man as I was, it must either have frighted them, or rais'd a great deal of Laughter, and as I frequently stood still to look at my self, I could not but smile at the Notion of my travelling through *Yorkshire* with such an Equipage, and in such a dress... (126)

Between the starkly opposed responses—fear or laughter—that issue from these imagined spectators, Crusoe more easily envisions the latter. Conceptions of Crusoe as rugged individualist and self-made man require considerable qualification in such moments; rugged individualists presumably spend less time worrying about how they look in their goatskin hats.

Displaced altogether from human society, Crusoe nonetheless envisions himself back within it repeatedly, placing himself as the awkward outsider at its margins. In recounting his clay-making endeavors, he once again hears mocking laughter. "It would make the Reader pity me, or rather laugh at me," he writes, "to tell how many awkward ways I took to raise this Paste;

what odd misshapen ugly things I made...” (102). Crusoe again raises a set of dual responses—pity *or* laughter—and once more inclines to the latter. Poised between sympathy and a send-up (“the sad castaway has the wrong hat and ugly jars”), Defoe’s text registers lingering discomfort. Even as his shame stands out as laughably inconsequential against the more pressing struggle for bare life, Crusoe’s fear of unshapely forms is marked and somehow made integral. His experience of exclusion recalls the British Isles as much as it does the Isle of Despair.

The text accounts for Crusoe’s shame by pointing to a formal problem: Crusoe’s jars are “misshapen,” and his cap, “shapeless.” The “pair of somethings” on his feet resembling “buskins” disgust him, given the “barbarous shape [they share with] all the rest” of what he wears. Crusoe may be accused, as Defoe himself was, of inordinate vanity; more is at stake, however, than one man’s longing for more stylish island attire. As the reader may recall, Locke’s allegory of pilgrimage in the *Letter Concerning Toleration* had portrayed religious pluralism in sartorial terms. The narrator draws out the case through a rhetorical question:

If I be marching on with my utmost vigour in that way which, according to the sacred geography, leads straight to Jerusalem, why am I beaten and ill-used by others because, perhaps, I wear not buskins; because my hair is not of the right cut...[or] because I follow a guide that either is, or is not, clothed in white, or crowned with a mitre?

For all Locke’s insistence that these outward guises do not matter, Defoe knows as a matter of experience that they do. By framing Crusoe’s shame as an aesthetic problem—a flaw in form and shape, the novel goes a long way to capturing divergent responses to the posture of nonconformity. Crusoe’s dumpy, dimpled jars lack the graces of symmetry associated by eighteenth-century theorists with beauty, and they display none of the sheen and polish of the lacquered imports then becoming status symbols.¹⁰⁵ His clothes are shapeless in the sense that they bear no resemblance to familiar wardrobe items. This departure from pre-existing ideals of geometric or more loosely formal modes of perfection is denounced as the absence of shape altogether—pure extension with no order or intention. Nonconformity can sit lightly on the skin in the terms of Locke’s allegory; Defoe’s work hints at how deeply it can be experienced and embodied as *deformity*.

* * *

Defoe would later characterize his most well-known work as an “allusive allegorick history”; contemporary critics disparagingly agreed. “There is not an old Woman that can go to the Price of it,” Charles Gildon sniffed, “but buys [*Robinson Crusoe*], and leaves it as a Legacy, with the *Pilgrims Progress*...to her Posterity.” Gildon’s disdain for the women who read the two as companion volumes tips us off to a lasting trend in criticism. Critics initially secured Defoe’s place in the canon by sundering his ties with less “literary” authors, rendering his text, if not an island to itself, the head of a newly discovered promontory. By dividing him from a written past, twentieth-century critics have managed to highlight Defoe’s originality (as one of the first novelists) and Crusoe’s banality (as the prototypical smug capitalist). It is true that critics like G.A. Starr and J. Paul Hunter have kept in view the thorough saturation of Defoe’s text with earlier texts—their characters and narratives, and the densely swirling layers of implicit, shared context.¹⁰⁶ Their readings, though, can be accepted in the most non-committal of ways, as scholars acknowledge spiritual autobiography only as the vestigial trace bound to disappear.

The persistence of spiritual autobiography as a continuing mode and practice is signaled, however, by the resounding laughter of Crusoe’s island. That laughter, at its most refined, is the

caustic wit of the Tory satirists, but the same spirit of derision runs from Butler's doggerel through the tales of Jonathan Swift and into Henry Fielding's irreverent prose. Many of the period's most distinguished authors assumed a ridiculing vein to expose social ills conceived of not as vice but folly, and in particular, the folly of dissent then widely mocked as "enthusiasm." The literary practice predicated on what I think of the doctrine of good humor is most explicitly treated in the third earl of Shaftesbury's *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708). The former pupil of Locke argues that forceful confrontations with dissent only legitimize it, and proposes instead another solution. "GOOD Humour," Shaftesbury proclaims, "is not only the best Security against Enthusiasm, but the best Foundation of Piety and true Religion."¹⁰⁷ This doctrine can be nicely reconciled with the Latitudinarian recommendation of sensible happiness; it can be reconciled less easily with dissenting efforts to join in. When Defoe tried his hand at satire, he had been quite literally pilloried. Thus chastened, the nonconformist struggles to read about himself in a genre that he is not permitted to write. As Defoe repeatedly flinches at the laughter of unseen readers, he is actively casting about as well for readers privy to another set of affective protocols. As I will suggest, Defoe's contemporaries lived to see the transformation of satire's bemused readers (and romance's besotted ones) into the tender readers of spiritual autobiography.

The classification of Defoe's work as either novel or spiritual autobiography (the latter itself a mode of "allusive allegorick history") obviously entails claims about the text's novelty or particularity. These very concepts or characteristics, however, can be usefully refracted through spiritual autobiography. It is a genre, after all, that continually models what might be conceived of as novelty without priority. Writers in this genre announce their discoveries of firstness: the first time I felt the sting of remorse, the first time I was overcome by the horrors of hell. As they recount these first experiences, however, contributors to the genre presuppose the near-infinite repetition of such discoveries across time past and present. For all the specificity of its narrated experiences, the spiritual autobiography carves out an infinitely elastic subject position for the beginner. When that other author of allegorical history, John Bunyan, had identified himself—in the title of his spiritual autobiography no less—as the *Chief of Sinners*, he did not negate the prior claim made by the apostle Paul.¹⁰⁸ Taken together, Bunyan's resounding declaration empties precedence of its claim to primacy. His appropriation of Paul's words models for readers the use that they should make of him. It is one of the most striking innovations enabled by the genre: spiritual autobiography prioritizes particular first experiences by displacing questions about social and epistemological privilege. If the genre advances something like the individuality of experience, it is one hardly worthy of the name, for this individuality emerges through the writer's discovery of his sinful resemblance to others. Even its most despairing accounts of solitude call on readers to share in the awful loneliness of existential crisis. Unsurprisingly, this genre demands complex modes of readerly identification, for it assumes collective identity as well as distinction (Bunyan is like and unlike the apostle and future readers), and simultaneously engenders repulsion and sympathy. Few modern readers of Defoe's work in its fully unabridged form could lavish praise on Crusoe and his creator, much less welcome identification with either of them. But the toleration that borders on aversion may not be the problem it seems, for the genre within which Defoe works (and, perhaps, lives) has always taken exception to the kinds of heroic virtues promoted by traditional literary forms from the epic to the romance.

In one of those truisms whose most forceful articulations are reserved for the undergraduate classroom, the rise of the British novel corresponded to increased leisure time for middle-class readers. Defoe's novel can thus be seen as divided between an earlier commitment

to moral instruction and a more modern relish for diversion; the genre was born when the newest readers of the eighteenth century sought to read about themselves. This narrative (especially in its most reductive form) is no longer rehearsed in the pages of peer-reviewed publications, yet it serves in studies of Defoe as something like a governing assumption. It is not altogether wrong. Yet it inhibits our ability to envision a scenario in which eighteenth-century readers discovered their own aversions to Defoe's work. There must, I think, be some deserved self-loathing behind critics' disdain for these naïve readers. The critic's own original position—her fascination with life, vividly rendered—can be fobbed off onto an earlier group of readers and recast as historical discovery: here was the first slide into the myopia of modern verisimilitude, when the immensity of the real contracted to an arm's length. The narrow scope of this hastily disavowed vision appears as a natural condition, in need of no further explanation. The eighteenth-century reader, like the childish eye, is simply captivated by the lifelike reflections of her nearest and dearest. As models of readerly appetite go, critics of the eighteenth-century have settled for a rather disappointing one: of all the possible diversions available to them, a class of people newly freed from the most onerous demands of labor are drawn—absolutely riveted—to the depiction of banal particulars. In his capacity to approach Defoe's work with an attitude other than utter absorption, a critic like Charles Gildon represents the singular exception or, better yet, a more sophisticated class of readers. Literary critics have not substantially revised Gildon's assumption about the novel's core audience: when its fond, often female, readers are not dutifully noting down moral lessons, they are merely fascinated by images of themselves.

It strikes me as a failure of the critical imagination to ascribe to readers no more than the delight of self-recognition. Crusoe's recurrent shame, to pick just one theme, suggests how the novel may have offered readers a means of coming to terms with both the painful exclusion of dissent and dissent's own conflicted negotiations with itself. Behind the critical readings that produce a Crusoe, evacuated of all but economic desires, lies the neo-Lockean assumption (for it is not properly Locke's own) of a starting point of neutrality and indifference; this liberal subject should be rationally disinterested enough to live and let live. The Defoeian admission, by contrast, gives voice to a collective subject who is still grappling with societal rejection of his own, to say nothing of others', ugly buskins. In this representation of liberalism's affect-laden subject, inequality and the shared animus of various groups exist as fundamental points of departure from which literary and political thought proceed.

As a genre, spiritual autobiography might be said to specialize in disgust, for its soul-searching usually concludes with a despairing sense of insufficiency. The image of the pious spiritual autobiographer (as we have seen, a key influence on the tender subject) must be expanded to include those of his introspective acts that end in frank disgust—that is, a disgust conceived of not as a distinct species of religious melancholy or masochism but as an expansive capacity for reflection and negative judgment. Defoe's work deserves special consideration as a spiritual autobiography that verges on both allegory and fiction: the sins of someone resembling the author have been scaled up, projected onto an ever-grander scale until they belong to everyone and no one in particular. For this corporate person to attain a sense of his own moral limits is also to confront a sense of the insufficiency of others'. It is no coincidence that Crusoe's tortuous inquiry into such "National Offences" as cannibalism follows from the discovery of a long trail of his own misdeeds (146). The submergence of Crusoe's struggle with shame and inadequacy in critical readings offers one index of the text's success in rendering the strife unremarkable, common to the point of seeming perfunctory. Defoe's work has so overshoot its

mark that the conflicted vagrancy of the tender conscience over moral insufficiency disappears into the dispassionate *homo economicus* and bourgeois Everyman.

Neither Defoe's protagonist nor his readers, however, start out from positions of limp indifference. Defoe's text confronts and leads readers through the avowed aversion to self and others. As I have already suggested, this antipathy flows at least in part from historically-specific expressions of nonconformist shame. Decades before, Shame in *The Pilgrim's Progress* had assumed human form just to taunt Faithful:

He [Shame] said it was a pitiful low sneaking business for a Man to mind [his conscience]; he said that a tender conscience was an un-manly thing, and that for a Man to watch over his words and ways... would make him the Ridicule of the times. He objected also, that but few of the Mighty, Rich, or Wise, were ever [tender consciences]... He moreover objected the base and low estate and condition of those that were chiefly the Pilgrims of the times... [He also said] that it was a *shame* to sit whining and mourning under a Sermon, and a *shame* to come sighing and groaning home. That it was a *shame* to ask my Neighbour forgiveness for petty faults, or to make restitution where I had taken from any: He said also that Religion made a man grow strange to the great... and made him own and respect the base, because of the same Religious fraternity. And is not this, said he, a *shame*?¹⁰⁹

Among his many accusations, Shame throws out two that shade together: the tender conscience is low, and the tender conscience inclines to those who are low (he "own[s] and respect[s] the base"). According to Gildon, Defoe is guilty of the latter. It is worth considering how Defoe's writing participates in this mode of ownership—the non-exclusive, minimal ownership of acknowledgement where it is usually withheld. Defoe's work troubles what can be taken as the mirror model of the early novel in which the newly or barely literate, like so many infants stuck in the mirror stage, delight in images. This model of reader response accords with the inordinately smooth *tabula rasa*, the mirror model of the understanding which Locke has been wrongly seen to advance. To recover the haptic dimensions of Lockean epistemology is to regain a model of feeling thought adequate to the kinds of responses elicited by Defoe and the spiritual autobiographers before him. Readers possessed of this pliant mind develop the tender receptivity that allows them to read (and, as *Pamela* registers, write) about those who are in various ways beneath and even repulsive to them: from formerly unregenerate selves to suspicious, dissenting ones and the "pitiful low sneaking" circles in which they run.

The spiritual autobiography and Quaker accounts of distress made similar demands on the reading publics they helped to establish: given their low subject matter, both genres court aversion even as they call for more than usually involved affective responses. By soliciting the receptivity forged through aversion, the spiritual autobiography distances itself from earlier genres and their models of exemplarity—the heroes of epic or romance, the venerable saints of hagiography. The leveling impulse that gradually permits distressed Quakers and autobiographical subjects to read as other than contemptible cuts across the past in a different way: figures from the past are hauled down until they look slightly more familiar, a little less exemplary. In the realm of spiritual autobiography, Bunyan's readers become acquainted with the apostle by another name. No longer St. Paul, the great exponent of Christian doctrine but Paul, tentmaker and chief of sinners, the apostle looks to Bunyan's readers like a fellow mechanic-preacher. The Puritan tendency to nudge biblical figures into contemporaneity informs

literary creations from Bunyan's Samson to Milton's Jesus; by Defoe's time, literary relations bordering on presumption had been brought closer to piety, as readers sought familiarity with the persons no less than precepts of authoritative figures.¹¹⁰

The possibilities, and even more so, the desiderata of reading have changed: for tender readers like Bunyan, it becomes a moral duty to seek intimacy across temporal and spatial divides. Achieved as it is by fits and starts, this disembodied communion would seem to take place in time, for readers caught between familiarity and historical estrangement betray the sense of an insurmountable divide. "I thought with my self," Bunyan confesses in his autobiography, shuttling uncertainly between greater and lesser offenders, "that I came nearer to *Judas*, than either to *David* or *Peter*."¹¹¹ Groping towards proximity, the reader is made even more aware of the maddening distance of figures who refuse to confirm or deny resemblance. It is no idle exercise to work out one's relation to such figures within the long caesura of eschatological time; a familiarity with their faults on the eve of reunion, as it were, might offer a foretaste of things to come. The Protestant ideal of the priesthood of all believers effectively called for the repopulation of the past and future with individuated subjects who could be reimagined through close reading as peers and contemporaries.

Long accustomed to the sign made flesh, readers of spiritual autobiography recognize the possibility of historical correspondence; more than that, however, they seek as a matter of spiritual duty an intimate, reading knowledge of a vast body of textual nobodies. This is not to say, however, that the virtual community is conjured up on the whims of a given reader. The spiritual autobiography in particular extends specific obligations that constitute this community; the participatory, receptive element of reading plays an especially salient role. In the course of making a narrative public, an autobiographer significantly divests himself of unwanted elements—past deeds, acts of the imagination, the moral failures of humanity writ large. The confessions that had long been encoded as private, fit only to be divulged to the priestly confessor or personal diary, are in more than one sense published to be distributed: these revelations are shared in order to be taken up by a willing community of readers. The public acts of disburdening, in other words, require a group of readers to shoulder those same burdens. What might otherwise be scandalous, unflattering admissions are implicitly accepted as the common capacities of all, provoking renewed introspection on the way to collective renunciation. The genre thus serves a vertical as well a horizontal, reparative function, as the text's reception by tender readers signals the sinner's restoration to the collective.

An anti-spiritual autobiography helps to illuminate the genre as a whole. A number of striking features conspire to make Crusoe's missing Brazilian account a counter-narrative; cumulatively, this text and its oral offshoots tell of the experience that hardens. The absent text twice described as a "full Account" summarizes for Crusoe's English correspondent, as he explains, "all my Adventures, my Slavery, Escape...and in what Condition I was now in..." (33). This account might possibly have included Crusoe's tale of Moorish captivity and the escape that sees him sneaking along the coast of Africa, begging onshore natives for provisions. Four years after penning this account, however, Crusoe repeats ("frequently," the text notes) another more flattering tale. Portraying himself as a hardy adventurer, the now-wealthy plantation owner regales fellow planters with "an Account of [his] two Voyages to the Coast of *Guinea*" and his extensive knowledge of African trading practices (34). Crusoe's desperate break for the African coast has lost its context on the way to being re-described as a commercial expedition—no longer a flight but an intended voyage. It is through these repeated, half-told tales that Crusoe fatefully lures a shipload of Brazilian slave-traders to sea.

Crusoe's reported experiences embolden his fellow planters to a kind of pseudo-nonconformity, for his account, like the spiritual autobiography it mimics, convenes a collective held together not least of all by a shared rejection of established authority. The slave trade, the text purposely explains, had been held under state monopoly, "carried on by the...[exclusive] Permission of the Kings of *Spain* and *Portugal*, and engross'd in the Publick" (35). As a joint-stock company, the collective that Crusoe incorporates apart from state approval distributes liability and labor. Yet this corporation plays no role in probing (to say nothing of distributing) the psychic burdens that abound in the spiritual autobiography—the unwanted elements fused with conceptions of the self. The surgical divestment of the latter is not necessarily at odds with the corporate activities of the former; they have of course been linked in far too many ways. Yet the genre of spiritual autobiography offers a model of thoroughgoing critique, making available a notion, say, of the self or a collective of selves, for the very purpose of revising or rejecting it. At its most radical, the genre launches an assault on the concept of the self, dispensing with it altogether. In the version of the full account he shares with the crew, though, Crusoe has no burdens and nothing to confess; he only declares an ample fund of knowledge that draws adherents. This account might be understood as "full" on the basis of its additive propensity. Rather than the diminution in which the autobiographer divides from a former self or parts with aspects of the self, this particular narrative turns on the grotesque desire for augmentation, as one's propriety enlarges through the annexation of other hands.

In what becomes the company's founding myth, Crusoe highlights not his own vulnerability but that of others: his narrative points up the exploitative potential of hospitable acts. Among the figures in the narrative praised for their generosity are the Portuguese captain who picks him up at sea and the English captain's widow who receives his narrative. The natives of Guinea, however, only demonstrate weakness when they provide Crusoe with food and water—an ignorance of the rules of profit-seeking exchange. On the most basic level, the natives are incapable of humane action because they are excluded from the bounds of a circumscribed humanity. But if the possession of a conscience or some will to ethical or altruistic action constitutes one of the period's litmus tests for the human, the text supplies a pointed instance—the natives' care for the lost stranger—that would seem an expression of this faculty. Crusoe, however, seizes on their assistance as a vulnerable point of entry, the opening breach of hospitality through which the tribal community can be trespassed.

Rather than interpreting the natives' actions as expressions of generosity, Crusoe takes their offers as responses to his commands. He is hardly in a position to refuse, but he subordinates even their tenders of provision to his sovereign capacity to accept them:

[they] brought me a great deal of their Provision, which tho' I did not understand, yet I accepted; then I made Signs to them for some Water, and held out one of my Jarrs to them, turning it bottom upward, to shew that it was empty, and that I wanted to have it filled. (28)

Crusoe conflates his success in signaling desire with his power to compel its fulfillment. The text intuits the disturbingly short passage from the natives' voluntary extension of grace to its forcible and systematic extraction. In the course of his Brazilian accounts, Crusoe's experience of his own and others' vulnerability breeds hardness. Experience in general, as theorists of empiricism were well aware, carries the potential to shut down pathways of knowledge as much as it softens or impresses. It is not for nothing that Adam Smith must insist decades later that viewers *do* feel

pain at seeing another on the rack.¹¹² The proper disposition to empirical stimuli will remain a long-term problem; an entire regimen of thought and action must be in place to allow the epistemological demands of empiricism to be fulfilled at the level of experience.

Where the founding narrative of Crusoe's corporation tells of the extraction or normalization of grace, it recalls another founding narrative: that of spiritual autobiography's ungrateful sinner as well as its insufficiently tender reader. Crusoe's "full" Brazilian account insists on the absolution of endings—he ends up safe, so extraordinary instances of grace can be forgotten, reconceived of as parcels of knowledge acquired by experience. The savvy negotiator need not consider how differently his story might have ended up without the assistance— or perhaps, providence—of Guinea's coastal inhabitants. A parallel problem presents itself with the proliferation of spiritual autobiographies: each holds out the absolution of endings, the ultimate comedy of deliverance that is the *raison d'être* of the genre. Defoe's text, less self-conscious in other areas than this one, deserves to be read as a meditation on how to read the genre. The most foolhardy way to approach the genre would be assume away the varying magnitudes of human action, given that every one of its principal trajectories end in salvation. Like Defoe's Brazilian braggart, the hardened reader expects grace as a constant norm or given—always forthcoming with the next tide—without preserving in view the kaleidoscopic wash of unwanted and unrealized possibilities, both retroactive and otherwise.

This tendency toward the normalization of grace along with the genre's logic of "novelty without priority" requires new principles of reading. The genre was already swelling with other texts and genres—figures from Bunyan's allegory, biblical history, Christ's parables were all being reconceived as both peers and touchstones, as capable of erring as eighteenth-century autobiographers. As the cloud of witnesses grows ever larger, however, the exemplary status of each steadily declines. The field for Crusoe, in some sense, is not too lonely but too crowded, as all the company (the quick, the dead, the imaginary) exists somewhat confusingly on the same footing. When he runs away from home, Crusoe fittingly enough joins a crowd: his elder brother has already done the same, and so, too, the next eldest. Crusoe might have taken the foreboding plots of his brothers in a more instructive sense, yet they are hardly conclusive from the point of view of spiritual autobiography. Jonah, Crusoe's contemporary in the deep time of spiritual autobiography, runs off to sea as well—and everything turns out for him, eventually. The same is true of the Prodigal Son, another nomadic figure acknowledged everywhere in Defoe's text. We are told, it is true, that Crusoe's middle brother is never heard from again. Crusoe's parents, though, would eventually say the same of their youngest, whose story never ends in ignominious death. To further unsettle the exemplary priority of birth order, one might say that Crusoe's narrative ought instead to be instructive for the way it invites reconsideration of his brother's trajectory: for all readers know, that second Crusoe might have found unlikely deliverance, too. I find it incredibly suggestive that Crusoe discovers on his return to England that one of his brothers (he does not say which) is survived by two sons who live in relative financial security, that rarest of Defoeian states.

How do readers work out salvation through this endless and often conflicting outpouring of other lives? Dissenters, one might say, have produced a hermeneutic knot, leaving readers in an affective double-bind: they must somehow accept, as shared burdens, the admissions of an ever-growing cadre of penitents without fully identifying with or re-enacting their disclosures with the supposition that grace awaits. From one perspective, these readers must remain affectively limber to the point of contortion, holding in imaginative tension a great many relations of similarity and separation. The tender reader cannot approach the narrative of a Jonah

or Crusoe from excessive distance, for the genre's central theme is that she, too, is as prone as they to disobedience; yet for all her concerted attempts to establish a sense of intimacy and shared weakness, the tender reader cannot come so near as to actively retrace or condone their missteps in any straightforward way.

One of Crusoe's first missteps, the text suggests, is a tendency to detach his narrative from all others—to suppose that the trajectories of his elder brothers, for instance, have no bearing on his own, and to neglect such precedents as Jonah or the Prodigal Son. But paying attention to precedents is no simple matter either. The example of Bunyan's Pliable sits uncomfortably next to that of the Prodigal Son, and Pliable's much-ridiculed homecoming, after all, is the one that most nearly informs Crusoe's shame. Pliable's case flies in the face of other examples, but many more could be enlisted on his side of the question as well: Pliable's fatal mistake is to prefer, with the reluctant nomads of Exodus, the certainties of home to the journey abroad. The expanding community of writers would only produce more of these readers' dilemmas through its diverging, intertwining, and conflicting narratives. The increase of so many narratives reaching the same comedic conclusion does not obviously support visions of a staid moral order. But one suspects that the eventual author of *Moll Flanders* had long perceived how the genre could support a sprawling network of paths and byways.

Within *Robinson Crusoe* more particularly, Defoe hints at one possible means of negotiating the growing interpretive burden: the novel elicits from readers the imaginative postures that bring multiple, conflicting narratives together. When Defoe's protagonist sets out to sea for the first time, intent on charting a singular pathway, another narrative shadows his. Before sinking off of Yarmouth, Crusoe's ship lurches around in the storm, weighed down with a freight of cargo that twice earns it the epithet "deep laden" (12). Seeking to lighten the load, sailors take aim at the ship's upraised arms, finally persuading the unwilling master to hack off the masts entirely. As these frantic operations proceed above, Crusoe remains below deck, frozen on his bed. Only after the mutilation above is complete do the sailors discover a leak in the cargo hold below. Crusoe faints on hearing this news, crashing headfirst into the cabin; he collapses again after a few turns at the pump.

From even the barest outline of this episode, Defoe's readers would have been reminded of Jonah, that other figure who runs headlong to sea. Beyond the obvious resemblance, however, Defoe's text subtly brings divergent narratives together in a series of unexpected moments. As with his English counterpart, Jonah remains helplessly below deck, supine as the crew faces death. This rather more hardened runaway, however, manages to stay calm—he is fast asleep. Onboard Crusoe's ship, the crew in some sense honors his wish to be singular and unmoored from the examples of predecessors by following a different plan of action. Instead of offloading the ship's cargo as Jonah's crew does, Defoe's sailors dismantle the ship itself without ever so much as looking into the cargo hold. In the episode's most striking inversion, Defoe's hapless sailor meets with deliverance quite literally when sailors lower him onto a lifeboat; as Crusoe describes it, "they rather put me into the Boat than that I might be said to go in, my Heart was as it were, dead within me" (13).

The point is not that Crusoe's crew should have followed Jonah's narrative or that every seagoing youth is condemned to repeat Jonah's narrative. Strict imitation cannot be the rule of a genre in which as many subjects as circumstances exist; as the ship's master explains to the young man, Crusoe cannot infer his duty or calling from that of another. Crusoe's case need not be referred to either the ship's master or to Jonah's at all. The latter narrative nonetheless peers through the interstices of the former with something of the luminosity of a photonegative—

throwing into relief, forming both complement and whole in its own right. The text illuminates a shifting model for keeping figures and texts loosely allied, or intimately so in a way that yet remains inconclusive. It could not have hurt (and might possibly have helped) Crusoe and his fellow sailors to have recognized the unfolding relevance of Jonah's narrative. Yet to adhere to the minutest details of this other narrative would be to confuse an exemplary account—in the weakest sense of an example—with positive law or express command.

Dayton Haskin's sense of a Miltonic "burden of interpretation" can be usefully brought to bear on the case of spiritual autobiography. Haskin elucidates a hermeneutic practice modeled in part by the biblical and Miltonic figure of Mary. In her encounters with the incomprehensible, Mary does not revel in ecstatic mystery; neither does she claim full knowledge of truths partially disclosed. She brings together all she has seen and heard, instead: she silently "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Readers of spiritual autobiography similarly require this measure of action and restraint—they must press forward to know while deferring fuller claims to understanding, and they must refrain from the certainties of literal-minded imitation. The reader of Crusoe's narrative (or Jonah's) cannot read in order to repeat; he cannot induce grace, for example, by running away and effectively staging an artificially-contrived experiment. This tender reader remains ignorant of parallels with other narratives at his own peril, and yet, the similarities that present themselves can at best be taken tentatively, held loosely but close to home. He readily registers shared experiences as they arise, but remains just as ready to abandon apparently shared trajectories for entirely uncertain ones.

In keeping with the genre's stance of reporting and the received experience it implies, readers and writers alike assume positions as observers of happenstance and recipients of action, preparing to receive grace without physically doing all that much. In general, the genre is remarkably sparing in its representations of conspicuous, external feats. Reading, conferring, praying—these often represent the height of action in spiritual autobiographies, and this muted conception of action is retained through the focused, artisanal projects of Defoe's text. As with Mary's silent collation, the close reader of this genre accumulates and compares experiences that hover below thresholds of clear significance; she continually assembles, as it were, the cross-indexed catalogue without granting it at once the elegant *telos* of narrative or the structured correspondence of typology. Not unlike Pamela's scribal character, she conceives of herself as a particular in an interminable string of circumstantial particulars—one of many literal "circumstances" to other lives, waiting around, equally ready to emerge from and recede back into the horizon.

As the spiritual autobiography cultivates the attentive but tentative collation that produces a work like *Pamela*, it grants to these circumstantial particulars—these apparently emergent individuals—an ever more central role in literary and political history. Within the aesthetic realm, it is easy to be suspicious of precise details that seem to align more with bookkeeping habits than creative notions of the uninterested, free play of the faculties. But a reading of spiritual autobiography points up an imaginative flexibility vis-à-vis the circumstantial particular that has been insufficiently theorized despite its pervasiveness in the period. The pointed specificity of this detail was not necessarily recognized by eighteenth-century readers as the exclusive possession of another person, time, or place, but as a thorough entanglement. The Quaker pamphlets, like the spiritual autobiographies with which they could be read, assume the entanglement in which the circumstantial particular does not end in itself. Such texts impart the knowledge that a given event befell a certain person at a specific time and place. They also imply

that this person could have been you and bears a certain relation to you—you could have been victim or perpetrator, or nearly allied with either or both.

The Quaker pamphlets, like their autobiographical counterparts, convey self-knowledge on the collective, indeed, national scale, and they mean every bit to inspire far-flung convictions of wrongdoing. At a time when the Quakers moved towards their commitment to non-violence, they significantly laid down the sword to sharpen their pens, issuing their most forceful appeals to that public of tender readers for whom circumstantial particulars would *mean* something. Those latter indicators are not just epistemological markers designed to assure skeptical readers, though they are that too. What looks like a fall into mere denotation represents, beyond that, an acknowledged restraint borne out of sociopolitical necessity. If the Quaker deployment of circumstantial particulars constitutes a call to arms, it is a call for a compensatory sensitivity to the denuded particular.

VII. Becoming Tender: The Case of *Robinson Crusoe*

At the highest pitch of sensitivity, the circumstantial particular registers as sublime. I will return at the close of this chapter to the case of the sublime particular, a phenomenon created through the enumeration of the dead. For now I wish to consider through *Robinson Crusoe* the formation of a lively community of readers through implicit rules for judgment and delayed interpretation. Defoe himself was engaged with the question of how hardened non-readers, as well as (or simply as) the isolated subjects of political exclusion and epistemological constraint, find their way into shared knowledge and the forms of collectivity it enables. By considering the rise of the tender conscience from Defoe's end of history, I have suggested a pre-history of sensibility as well as a far-flung movement in its own right—a cultural awakening to the force of tenderness. The culture of sensibility that proceeds as a reaction and effort at containment is one that borrows liberally from the earlier movement with which it is obsessed. Defoe depicts the broader tenderizing process in miniature through *Robinson Crusoe*.

Defoe writes his novel in a Lockean world of increasingly enclosed subjects in which the apparently cavernous mind can be likened to a presence chamber or *camera obscura*. What had once blazed within—the piercing rays of the Quaker inner light or the soft glow of the Latitudinarians' candle of the Lord—had to some extent been snuffed out. Locke supplies in the place of extraordinary revelation and innate ideas another consolation: there is light enough in the external world. The empirical mind is tasked with admitting this light, preserving its vitality within, and maintaining its lively presence long after it fades away elsewhere. Locke can dispense with innate ideas so serenely because he envisions a mind capable of rallying against both external and internal decay. More so than the more secluded metaphors of mind, Locke's wax tablet emphasizes the modifiable dispositions that facilitate the absorption of knowledge. If innate ideas (say, of the existence of God) do not constitute the human mind in any fundamental sense, then knowledge of this as well as other basic concepts becomes a matter of accepting intimations from the world without. Knowledge, both temporal and spiritual, turns on receptivity *tout court*. The tenderizing of mind and conscience, for Locke and especially Defoe, proceeds in lockstep: spiritual deliverance follows from the attainment of impressionability in general.

Since the condition of tenderness encompasses a way of inhabiting the world and variously apprehending or failing to apprehend it, one way to approach the problem in Defoe's work is to begin with the sea, the expanse that draws Crusoe in with such undeniable force. Virginia Woolf gave voice to a defining critical omission when she remarked on the absence of sunsets and sunrises in *Robinson Crusoe*. Readers have not had much to say and barely

remember the young Crusoe's fascination with the beauty of the natural world. And indeed, the stock characters to whom Crusoe bears close resemblance—the rebellious youth, the greedy capitalist—do not readily melt in wonder at dawn or sunset. Yet Crusoe does. As the sun sets and rises over once-troubled waters, Crusoe watches spellbound, marveling after the storm at the

charming fine Evening [that] follow'd; the Sun went down perfectly clear and rose so the next Morning; and having little or no Wind and a smooth Sea, the Sun shining upon it, the Sight was, as I thought, the most delightful that ever I saw. (10)

Crusoe's delight at this particular view above all other youthful temptations deserves some notice. He gazes in awe at this performance of amnesia, "looking with Wonder upon the Sea that was so rough and terrible the Day before, and could be so calm and so pleasant in so little time after" (10). Woolf is wrong about sunset and sunrise, but not altogether so in her recognition of Crusoe's blinkered perceptions. The problem is that one must also recognize how this very first of Defoe's novels theorizes the extended process by which hardened dissenters might return to that lost state of consciousness.

In this encounter, the very substance of the sea seems to have transformed, from the peaks and valleys of collapsing waves to the shimmering light of unbroken surface. This shape-shifting medium, in Crusoe's anthropomorphic terms, deceives by concealing its valleys of death; from another view, however, the ocean's amnesia promises divine forgetfulness and the return to heavenly favor. In his astonishment at the sunlit sea, Crusoe glimpses the heavens above meeting the waves below; the reader would not be amiss to see in the reflection of sky in sea the British sailor treading heaven underfoot. Defoe is not quite singing James Thomson's "Rule Britannia," at least not yet, but Crusoe does take this scene as permission to proceed by forgetting all earlier misgivings about going to sea. Crusoe's fascination with this metamorphosis calls attention to the sea as an image of spiritual as well as aesthetic and epistemological smoothness. His attraction to its glassy surface recalls his peculiar disappointment with the lumpy jars that betray the uneven application of force, a frustration set in stark relief by the immense pleasure he takes in the reflective *tabula rasa*, the liquid mirror through which the keel glides without leaving so much as a trace. Unlike Locke's waxy, pockmarked tablet of impressions, this forgiving surface holds the possibility of an unbounded and perpetually regretless future.

The sea, or at least the smooth, gliding motion it supports, offered itself irresistibly as a metaphor for the passage through life; Crusoe's father had drawn on precisely this motion to articulate his conception of the good life. In his ideal voyage, "Men went silently and smoothly thro' the World, and comfortably out of it" (6). Such men pass unnoticed, untroubled, and unchanged, leaving in exactly the same condition as when they entered. Not one to seek out the steep paths of pilgrimage, Crusoe's father defends instead the virtue of those "in easy Circumstances sliding gently thro' the World" (6, 7). To secure this easy slide, Crusoe's father recommends the study of law—a domain of knowledge that Defoe had discussed over a decade earlier in terms of movement, though he had then assigned it a rather different motion. Convicted in his lifetime of seditious libel and debt, Defoe had scorned the law as a series of "wild Meanders"; in his letters, he denounced its anti-Christian tendencies (the law, he fumed, was "a Heathern (*sic*) Word for Power").¹¹³ Defoe's eldest son had not exactly run off to sea, but left off his studies at Edinburgh in 1710 for a short-lived pursuit of a legal career.¹¹⁴ Defoe might well have felt ambivalent about a profession that could secure smooth passage for his family at the

expense of others. For in the eyes of the dissenter, the legal practitioner could, more so than any other individual, seem responsible for forcing nonconformists through the labyrinths of a changeable and avowedly inequitable justice system. The elder Crusoe's promise of ease and ready happiness—which not one but three sons reject—recalls the allurements of the *via media*, the Church of England's offer of happiness through preferment and legal recognition.

In his narrative, Crusoe, who describes himself in retrospect as a “hardned, unthinking” creature burdened by a “Stupidity of Soul,” is nevertheless highly capable of altering his island habitat to suit what readers will recognize as a preference for smooth regularity (76). Crusoe successfully reduces his living quarters to a regular shape. “I drew a half Circle . . .,” he patiently explains, “which took in about Ten Yards in its Semi-diameter from the rock, and Twenty Yards in its Diameter” (51). As in the case of his pottery, this appearance of shapeliness has little bearing on the matter of survival. The obvious artifice of this boundary line, however, signals the castaway's infusion of labor into the land; it provides clear visual evidence of the mixture Locke cites in the *Second Treatise* as the grounds of private property. Crusoe continues to expend more labor on this new property, spending entire weeks digging a cave out of the rock perimeter. Originally intended as a storeroom behind the semicircular plot of his living quarters, the cave grows along with Crusoe's desires for commodious living; eventually, he enlarges it to serve as a cabinet as well as “a Kitchen, a Dining-Room, and a Cellar” (64). As the circular palisades outside join with their increasingly concave opposite, the rock face gives way above to a hollow half-dome.

This vault soon proves unable to support itself. On the very day Crusoe finishes his excavation, the dome collapses, almost crushing him to death; it crashes down once again during a later earthquake. Crusoe cannot escape the tenderizing process set in motion by the opening shipwreck, as the pounding waves of one storm after another return in a rain of rock shards. As in the sea's uprising, when flat extension suddenly surges above, a hollow void recognizable not long before only as negative space materializes as crushing substance. The man so lately interested in the malleability of the rock face is met with a renewed awareness of his own malleability. The cave, as part of a natural environment that answers to Defoe's God, reveals a great but not infinite capacity to support its unperceived existence. Whether conceived of as space or grace, its primary affordance is negated through the tenant's drive to maximize it.

Through progressive enlargement, the structure of the cave disappears in more than one way, for its enabling conditions prior to collapse have become so all-encompassing—so omnipresent to the senses that they drop out of awareness altogether. What Crusoe could once grasp in full is successively partitioned: the rock hollow becomes a cave which is reduced to a wall for supporting a shelf. The excavation reflects no more than what Crusoe's father once advised. Aristocratic luxury is excessive; Crusoe seeks only to recreate the middle-class comforts of an English home. But the apparent restraint of this desire is exposed in Crusoe's circumstances as less than moderate. The solitary individual bent on reconstituting the amenities of civilized society apart from civil society could labor for a very long time, with no end in sight. His insatiably modest aspirations (he just wants a table and a chair) feed into an emergent category of desire, one that appears morally neutral precisely because of the insignificance of its objects and the seemingly closed loop of their production and consumption. Crusoe's author, who had been the energetic projector of so many failed business schemes in his lifetime, may well be reflecting on the not-quite-so invisible hand that had constantly punctured his own ideal, self-reinforced loop of property and entrepreneurial labor.

One final tenderizing blow falls to Crusoe in the course of an earthquake, when the cave's crumbling roof forces him out completely. Unwilling to stay in a place that has twice threatened to bury him, Crusoe remains outside during the subsequent storm. For three full hours, he huddles to the ground as hurricane-strength winds rip through the island. It is this rain-drenched encounter that insinuates itself into the vision that precipitates his conversion. Crusoe meets in this dream with earthquakes and glowering skies as before, affixed to the exact same place; this time, the elements accompany the even more terrifying descent of a man with a spear. Crusoe must be brought to his senses vis-à-vis the natural world in all its fury before this natural world can be integrated with the dream, that natural and sometimes supernatural phenomenon that was then being expelled from philosophical inquiry. The dream had long served, of course, as the *locus classicus* for the misleading sense experience. For empiricism to take hold as common sense, the sensory encounter of the dream needed to be dismissed from sense experience altogether. Defoe counters this dismissal by making Crusoe attend to the natural world as well as the dream's sensible nonsense; a thorough awareness of the former, he insists, leads into the perception of the latter. Because Defoe's protagonist has felt the force of the elements so fully, higher apprehension and second sight follow as easily as falling asleep.

Crusoe's subsequent terror at the footprint attests to his enhanced impressionability. The structure of impressionability, as the text and Crusoe to some extent recognize, very nearly approaches states of gullibility and susceptibility; hence Crusoe's panicked inquiry into the print's origins. He rapidly cycles through possibilities, inquiring as one who recognizes a new vulnerability to deception. He thinks first of external deception (the demonic trick), then looks into the possibility of self-deception (could it be his own footprint?), before finally wondering whether the imprint might not pertain to him at all. Crusoe's line of questioning anticipates Gildon's objections about a providential world that perversely revolves around the lone individual. Through the disembodied impression, Crusoe comes face to foot, one might say, with an inscrutable sign that denies the privileged arc of his own existence. He has recently come away with an awestruck sense of his significance before God; he must now grapple with the existence of an imagined community of people indifferent to his existence.

Like Defoe long before him, Crusoe is made aware from the margins of a society that is at best indifferent and at worst hostile to his presence. Just as he locates his own existence within a universal scheme, he is pulled back to the fringes of a collective that carries on quite well without his sense of cosmic order. Through yet another unsettling moment in the tenderizing process, the castaway comes to recognize his belated, secondary status as a Caribbean islander. It is hardly coincidental that Crusoe's first impulse is to demolish his holdings. The very thought of someone else's existence throws all his property claims in doubt. What are the claims of his semicircle next to the stray imprint of the foot—the claims of property against the right to bare existence? The lightness of the latter impression is countered in the text by its weight with Crusoe; witness his years-long obsession. Yet the text surely exaggerates at the same time the fragility of shared existence to minds less retentive. For almost as casually as the imprint registers as proof of another's existence, it disappears, relinquishing its own right to exist.

Crusoe worries about the moral status of the natives' cannibalism, yet one senses beneath this anxiety the frightening prospect of his own inscrutability. If Crusoe has lately discovered a narrative arc through which life can be rendered as a written account, he must now acknowledge whole societies for whom that account might be as meaningless as a stray mark. The problem goes beyond justifying beliefs or systems of values; Crusoe has looked into the abyss in the sense that he recognizes no shared grounds of either language or culture from which he might account

for his own right to remain uneaten. Even the non-verbal expressions that once seemed so eloquent as modes of defense are suddenly evacuated of meaning.

The encounter with the footprint is, of course, as much about thought itself as it is about the Old World's fall into insularity. As with Crusoe's encounter with the sprouting corn, this episode captures the marvelous workings of "inexperienced" thought in which a plainly sensible object appears either as supernatural or the least interesting thing imaginable—the providential sign, a demonic stamp *or* the mark of your own heel. And even this mark, once invisible to a hardened Crusoe (for he does seem, in all his surprise, to have never noticed his own footprints before), can become completely absorbing given its unaccountable appearance. It is not for nothing that Locke's *Essay* describes fading sense impressions as footprints. Defoe may have intuited the manner in which the senses' spritely offspring leaves untraceable marks, each of which assumes a life of its own in the mind as original imprints fade. The Lockean empiricism that Defoe recognizes, far from shunning a sense of mystery, presupposes a tender mind that presses through the track of the sensible to elusive bodies of intention and comprehensive, shared contexts. The wondrous impression all but forces the mind to seek its non-sensible sources and properties, whether assembled from collective encounters or the mind's reflective creations. As Defoe depicts it, the sense encounter partakes of the instant receptivity of nerve endings without ending in them; the experience of tender empiricism unfolds as a prolonged narrative event.

If Crusoe had visited the other side of the island, he would have observed many more footprints much earlier. Inasmuch as the footprint and the body of human society it figures exist long before the English empiricist takes notice, they resemble innate ideas, those axiomatic grounds of thought that the mind through careful reasoning discovers already lodged within. Their equivalents have been plucked from the mind and placed outside, accessible through tenderized senses. When Defoe's footprint impresses the perceiving mind, this entry is at once a routine sense encounter that yields knowledge and one that constitutes the perceiver more directly. Like the revelation of the innate idea, this encounter is also a realization of collective identity: the footprint discloses something of who I am, and the larger body of humanity within which I belong. To put it another way, Defoe's footprint marks a primal moment when objectivity can be glimpsed, as it were, from a distance. Given its dual status—unknown but also one's own, utterly alien but all too familiar—the footprint treads the way of objectivity, that curious state that remains separable from a given perceiver despite its constitution by perceiving participants. The European's belated awareness (he has been on one side of a larger island, alone only in his own mind) exposes the limits of the individual's sense experience as conduit of knowledge. Yet those limits in Defoe's hands become a theoretical strength: they explain how a body of knowledge might be named as such even in the face of widespread skepticism or disregard.

Crusoe's horror at the footprint conveys something of the vertiginous experience of emerging conceptions of objectivity. The unexpected impression, like the plunge into another hemisphere, does not yield the assuring confirmation of deep, innate knowledge. It has been a long time since scholars pretended that the premodern world was one of perfectly uncritical harmony. At least in theory, though, the tradition of innate ideas makes it possible to imagine a coherent world of concentric correspondence. The transhistorical community that emerges out of the practices of spiritual autobiography is not unrelated to this earlier one. As discussed above, however, the emergence of this collective registers more as a disturbance. More than its predecessors, this community is discursively created, and its continuous narrative formation is organized around a disruptive breach into and out of ignorance. I mean a spiritual ignorance, of

course. But Defoe knew too well that the condition of ignorance as a whole had bottomed out not long before, and had been collectively experienced with an intensity that has rarely been equaled since. The shock of Crusoe's spiritual awakening echoes the still-reverberating tremors of one old world reeling from its centuries-long ignorance of another. Defoe's depiction of a completely altered worldview from one side of the island to another points up an obvious affordance of the senses to metaphysical problems. It suggests how varying degrees of sensuous, and following that, spiritual, perception can be attained by some and not others without altogether invalidating that perception altogether. Clarity of vision at one time and place but not another is to be expected. The tactile angle pushes the standard visual argument derived from perspective a step further: those subject to the very same external conditions, and touched by the very same stimuli, can be variously moved or not at all.

Across a whole range of registers, tenderness had come to be seen as a desirable condition to be cultivated. Its awareness carried implications for Lockean empiricism and its particular mode of epistemic humility. Scholars of Locke have recognized how he shifts the locus of knowledge towards an outside world apart from an enclosed observer; such a distinction, I believe, was tenable only because Locke offered it to readers already seeking the tenderness through which this distinction could dissolve, as the outside imprinted itself within and vice versa. The sense impressions—partly inside, partly outside—that cannot be universally perceived might nonetheless partake of a shared reality belonging to but not wholly determined by the realms of history and political power. One could read this as it has been read, as a devastating instance of ideology, written just in time to authorize imperialist expansion. One could also read this, however, as the solution that the Quaker witnesses of Defoe's day needed: what I know might not be false just because I am the one who happens to know it. The tender empiricism of Locke and Defoe preserves a place for the dissenting position; it leaves room for the deeply felt but unshared—indeed, minority—perspective without rendering nonsensical the particular terms of that existence.

To return, one last time, to Crusoe: the text never gives him a proper burial, though it contemplates doing so. If Crusoe had not been so afraid of a violent death, he confides, he would have been "content to have capitulated for spending the rest of my Time there [on the island], even to the last Moment, till I had laid me down and dy'd, like the old Goat in the Cave" (152). Crusoe has stumbled across a cave in which he finds a goat gasping out its last breaths; he imagines himself doing the same. The cave which Crusoe imagines for his final capitulation is unlike the home he once carved for himself, and unlike the smooth and shapely forms to which he gravitates—it is in "in no manner of Shape, either round or square, no Hand having ever been employ'd in making it, but those of meer Nature" (150). On one side of this unchiseled tomb, Crusoe finds a narrow passageway; he climbs through on his hands and knees.

For most of Crusoe's narrative, his visual perception has been characterized by a deliberate flatness. He notes horizontal measurements (the size of his living quarters, the length of his canoe), and yet rarely pauses to take in the full measure of vertical depth. The reader never learns the height of Crusoe's artificial cave, not even when he describes propping up the fallen roof; Crusoe, furthermore, seems never to have seen stars in the night sky. Through his bounded apprehension, Crusoe figures the experience of the insufficiently tender conscience—one not callously hardened, but peacefully and blissfully indifferent to that which it acknowledges as a void. There is no need for Crusoe to look up when there is nothing in the hollow vault of heaven; the blackened roof of his cave maps perfectly onto the blank sky beyond it. Crusoe thus navigates through most of the text with the same sight lines as the island's goats, who, "by the

position of their optics, . . . directed [their sight so] downward that they did not readily see objects that were above them” (53). When Crusoe gazes around the natural cave, then, the text marks a departure from all that has preceded. The bruising of his conscience has induced a near-physiological transformation through which it becomes possible for him to perceive depth, and to stunning effect. When Crusoe crawls out through the tunnel, he rises, as it were, for the first time into a luminous, three-dimensional world:

When I was got through the Strait, I found the Roof rose higher up, I believe near twenty foot; but never was such a glorious Sight seen in the Island, I dare say, as it was, to look round the Sides and Roof of this Vault, or Cave; the Walls reflected 100 thousand Lights to me from my two Candles; what it was in Rock, whether Diamonds, or any other precious Stones, or Gold, which I rather suppos'd it to be, I knew not. (151)

The text's most beautiful revelation follows from Crusoe's passage through the shapeless antechamber. Perhaps this is a vision of the promised rest after a life of nonconformity. But this passage captures something, too, of the unsought beauty disclosed by the shapeless literary text, the “loose, baggy” deformity that the dissenter helps usher into the world.

Inside the gleaming vault, Crusoe's wonder causes him to desist from knowing, or rather leads him to be moved—that is, to know in the terms of an affective empiricism. He is so deeply moved that he recedes, preserving an appreciative distance. Crusoe will soon extend his sovereignty over the island in all sorts of ways, making it all the more remarkable that he abstains throughout the rest of the text from scaling the vault to make it a mine. The vault's vertical dimensions serve as a consolation, however hollow one might find it. It is an eighteenth-century acknowledgment of satiety and restraint, the acknowledgement that humanly-owned property is horizontally oriented. The earth's inhabitants have yet to lay claim to the commons above. The starry vault assures Crusoe of his bounded desire for sovereignty: he has yet to raise himself to the heights, and is far from wishing to make that final arrogation. This, of course, is an enabling self-portrait of finitude. Limited as it is, this portrayal of limits raises questions about outer bounds. What would a more compellingly shared symbol of desire's limits look like? Shattering the rock ceiling could, as Defoe's text bears out, mark the first step towards a meteoric rise above all others; more soberly, however, that same roof reveals, as it implodes, the need to reimagine the dissenting drive to “endless aspiration.”

Crusoe's admiration for the vault is short-lived. He pauses awestruck before hauling guns in to make the cave his armory. The tomb, in the end, marks a kind of death of dissenting tenderness. Dissenters once sought accommodation by making much of conscientious weakness; Crusoe here elevates physical vulnerability above every other mode of weakness. He professes no fear at all of eventual death, but is terrified of the sudden death that somehow always awaits him. As he subordinates all duties to the single remaining one of self-preservation, the dissenter treats his capacity to harm as a right and responsibility sanctioned by heaven itself. This chapter has reviewed some of the cultural pressures behind this stance of aggrieved aggression that came, in some strands of dissent, to wholly reconstitute group identity. This is how one kind of dissenting tenderness ends—in the denial of one's own disproportionate power to harm through the constant tending of one's own weakness. The next chapter turns from this weakness to another strand of dissent. The Methodists share a common cause with dissenters from Defoe's milieu—yet they trace their origins elsewhere in part to sidestep the painful history that threatened to draw them into Crusoe's unyielding stance.

Chapter Two

¹ See Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, and Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, esp. 1-4.

² Thus one influential study of novelistic character "bypass[es] the tradition in which literary characters *only* represent—in which all that characterization does is memorialize a series of institutionally sanctioned versions of what 'the self' is or should be"; see Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 12. The novelistic 'self,' as this chapter argues, was forged out of conditions in which the stamp of institutional approval was hardly forthcoming.

³ For Nancy Armstrong, the rich interiority of the novel's characters underwrites illusions of autonomy that ensure the "ubiquity of middle-class power." As liberalism championed the feeling, feminized individual, Armstrong contends, it softened traditional expressions of power to secure the willing consent of newly private subjects who imagined themselves outside the realms of political power; see *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 5. Michael McKeon's *The Secret History of Domesticity* traces a similar transition in which explicitly political power is internalized as subjectivity; see especially ch. 14.

⁴ Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*, 13.

⁵ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 85.

⁶ One notable exception is McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, which does not focus on Lockean epistemology but reads the novel as a mediation of the dialectical impulses of "romance idealism" and "naive empiricism" (47-64).

⁷ See M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, esp. 57-69. For an account of the collective nature of the Baconian enterprise, see Picciotto, especially on the "Invisible College" as a remedy for the limitations of individual sense (116-128). See also Mary Thomas Crane, *Losing Touch with Nature: Literature and the New Science in Sixteenth-Century England*, for the distrust of the individual's senses among practitioners of the New Science.

⁸ Gary Hatfield, "Remaking the Science of Mind: Psychology as Natural Science," 188.

⁹ Samuel Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, 271.

¹⁰ *The Case of Dissenters as Affected by the Late Bill...for Preventing Occasional Conformity*, 24. This work and subsequent ones discussing incapacity are quoted in Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life*, 93.

¹¹ *The Proceedings of Both Houses of Parliament, in the years 1702, 1703, 1704*, 15.

¹² Moses Lowman, *The Case of the Acts Against the Protestant Dissenters, Consider'd in a Dialogue*, 15.

¹³ Defoe, *A Serious Inquiry into this Grand Question*, 6.

¹⁴ For a very readable account of Locke's reaction to the persecution of dissent, see John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 115-124. Marshall discusses the case of dissenting jurors in this section.

¹⁵ See J.R. Milton and Philip Milton, “Selecting the Grand Jury: A Tract by John Locke,” 192.

¹⁶ John Locke, *Posthumous Works...Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, 66.

¹⁷ See Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 112; see also Tim Harris, “‘Lives, Liberties and Estates’: Rhetorics of Liberty in the Reign of Charles II,” 225.

¹⁸ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 90. Which is not to say that Bunyan was himself a Quaker; he wrote tracts against what he saw as their heretical views. Yet the nature of Restoration dissent was such that nonconformists were literally lumped together: in Bedford jail, Bunyan found himself in the company of fifty Quakers. He thereafter tempered his tone when speaking against them; see Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and His Church*, ch. 7.

¹⁹ Or actually guilty, as Richard Ashcraft argues in *Revolutionary Politics and Locke’s Two Treatises of Government*, ch. 7. If Marshall’s Locke is an enlightened philosopher of toleration, Ashcraft’s Locke is a radical revolutionary, directly in league with those who would kill to preserve English liberties. But see also Mark Goldie’s argument that Locke’s “defence of Dissent, and the attack on the priestcraft of a hierocratic episcopate, render Locke’s politics as much a work of radical Protestant ecclesiology as of secular revolutionism” (“John Locke and Anglican Royalism,” 61).

²⁰ Marshall, *John Locke*, 170.

²¹ William I. Hull, *Benjamin Furly and Quakerism in Rotterdam* (Lancaster, 1974), 4-5. Though it was supposed to offer dissenters a reprieve, the second and much-reviled Conventicle Act of 1670 continued to impose fines on those who preached, held, and attended meetings. See also Harris, 224-225.

²² Marshall, *John Locke*, 15.

²³ Locke, *Locke on Toleration*, ed. Richard Vernon (Cambridge, 2010) provides an invaluable resource: excerpts of the toleration letters that, in nineteenth-century editions of Locke’s *Works*, run upwards of 500 pages.

²⁴ Anne, “Queen’s Speech in Parliament, the 27th of February, 1702,” 11.

²⁵ Locke, *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (1690), 142, italics added.

²⁶ Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), 28. The Latin original of this text had been published in Holland earlier the same year.

²⁷ John Tillotson, *Sermons* (1694), 152.

²⁸ Ethica B. MS Locke c 28, p. 141. A reader like Susanna Wesley readily recognized the otherworldly drift of the Lockean account of unease from the *Essay* alone. In a journal entry from the 1710s, she makes devotional use of it: “Mr. Locke well observes,” she notes, “that there are not many whose happiness reaches so far as to afford them a constant train of moderate mean pleasure without any mixture of uneasiness; and yet...[many] could be content to stay here for ever, though they cannot deny but that it is possible there may be a state of eternal durable joys after this life, far surpassing all the good [that] is to be found here”; see *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, 285. In the next chapter, we will see how the Methodism of Wesley’s sons take up this Lockean conception of happiness. When the empiricist philosopher advances *unease* as a fundamental drive to human action, he gestures toward an externally-oriented lack or desire that the Wesleys deploy against the Hobbesian and Mandevillian springs of self-love.

²⁹ Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), 7.

³⁰ John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, 217.

³¹ The latter, of course, is the subject of Albert O. Hirschman's magisterial work, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*. In England by the turn of the eighteenth century, the term often used in connection with the state and its representatives (e.g. "the interest of England") was also being applied, in a more innovative fashion, to smaller groups and individuals. Thus the king's chaplain could tell parishioners in 1704 that it was not so much God's power that compelled believers to awe and reverence—"our own Interest and Self-love do oblige us" (Calamy, *Sermons*, 60).

³² My sense of Latitudinarian thought is corroborated by Isabel Rivers' work; see the first volume of *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, ch. 2.

³³ Hobbes, of course, was responding to the arguments of tender consciences. Parliamentarians like Henry Parker who needed to establish the debate in more constitutional terms invoked natural law and its provisions for self-preservation. What they raised as an exceptional measure and last defense, Hobbes made the starting point for human society. Parker had argued in 1644 that subjects were "now farther intituled to defence by the *extraordinary* law of generall necessity (of the benefit of which iron law, particular men are not wholly abridged)...[We] remonstrate to all the world, that we take now up these one just arms only for defence to secure our Lives, Liberties, and Religion against the bloody emissaries..."; *Jus Populi, or, A Discourse wherein Clear Satisfaction is Given as well Concerning the Rights of Subjects as the Rights of Princes*, 64, italics added.

³⁴ Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, 7-12.

³⁵ See Victoria Kahn, *Wayward Contracts: The Crisis of Political Obligation in England, 1640-1674*.

³⁶ The Latitudinarian elevation of individually attainable happiness has been insufficiently recognized. Adam Potkay, for instance, finds the third earl of Shaftesbury more influential than the Latitudinarians in developing a conception of "ethical joy" because, as he argues, Shaftesbury elucidates a notion of "joy without a countervailing terror" (*The Story of Joy*, 99). The joy that encompasses terror seems in hindsight to belong to a completely category altogether; Potkay's non-eudemonistic "joy" serves this turn. As a development of seventeenth-century politico-religious discourse, however, Latitudinarian language registers as a shock of the most disarming kind. The millenarian striving of the English Revolution contrasts sharply with the rise of what Isabel Rivers calls "the characteristic note of latitudinarian preaching"—its emphasis on "religion as the means to happiness and on the pleasure...[of] its duties" (*Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 1.84). I cannot do full justice here to the larger question of political notions of happiness. The Latitudinarian turn, however, deserves to be read alongside the fall narrative in Vivasvan Soni, *Mourning Happiness: Narrative and the Politics of Modernity*. The eighteenth-century deployment of happiness I find here accords with Soni's contention that happiness "names the realm of privacy itself" (21); I share with Soni a sense of the need to set aside this privacy towards a more communally-based *judgment* of happiness. The tender conscience, as I read it, is that affordance—at once affective and discursive—through which postclassical, lyric subjects tend to stringent, ongoing debates about ethical as well as viable forms of collective care.

³⁷ Tillotson, *Sermons*, 155.

³⁸ John Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (1675), 324.

³⁹ Tillotson, *Works*, 2.205.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Wilkins, *Of Natural Religion*, 327; a paraphrase of 2 Timothy 3:12.

⁴¹ Wilkins, *Of Natural Religion*, 329. The italics allude to Isaiah 49:23.

⁴² Locke, *A Third Letter for Toleration* (1692), 127.

⁴³ See “A Summary Account of the Forementioned Sufferings,” in *The Suffering-Case of...the People Commonly Called Quakers* (1709).

⁴⁴ William Penn, *The Continued Cry of the Oppressed for Justice...The Second Part* (1676), 54.

⁴⁵ George Whitehead, *A Brief Account of Some of the Late and Present Sufferings of the People Called Quakers* (1680), 83.

⁴⁶ *A True and Impartial Narrative of...Illegal and Arbitrary Proceedings...[Against] Innocent and Peaceable Nonconformists* (1670), 4.

⁴⁷ Penn, *The Continued Cry of the Oppressed for Justice* (1675), 10.

⁴⁸ Baxter, *Answer*, 94. When Baxter penned these words in 1680, the worst was yet to come. Two years later, the bedridden minister watched as all his possessions were distrained (his goods, his library, “even the bed I lay sick on”). In papers published after his death, he noted that

when [the informer, constable, and officers] had taken and sold all, and I had borrowed some bedding and necessaries of the buyer, ...they threatened to come upon me again and take all as mine, whosoever it was, which they found in my possession. So I had no remedy, but utterly to forsake my house and goods and all, and take secret lodgings at a distance, in a stranger’s house... (*Reliquiae Baxterianae*, 192)

Baxter dismissed the loss of all he owned as a “small affliction,” but confessed that the heaviest burden was the loss of his books. “The separation from my Books would have been a greater part of my small Affliction,” he wrote, but “I found I was near the end both of that Work and Life which needeth Books; and so I easily let go all: Naked came I into the World, and naked must I go out” (*RB*, 192). He would not go out just yet: three years later at the age of 70, he would be hauled to court and imprisoned one last time.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Answer*, 94.

⁵⁰ Though he attends more to Locke’s Deist proclivities, John Yolton convincingly argues for the entwinement of religion and philosophy in the *Essay*; see *John Locke and the Way of Ideas*, esp. ch. 2. By tracing innate ideas to earlier conceptions of the conscience, Yolton’s genealogy does not obviously align with the one I have laid out. Our views, however, can be synthesized as follows: Locke dispenses with the earlier, syllogistic conceptions of conscientious operations that could be adduced as innate proof of God’s existence. He preserves instead the ever-ready disposition and experiential form of conscience—the tender conscience—which does not specify content in advance.

⁵¹ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding. In Four Books*, IV.19.8. I refer throughout to the fourth edition of 1700.

⁵² When Leo Damrosch invokes similar terms to discuss Nayler’s Christological resemblance, he refers to Quaker notions of the indwelling Christ who comes alive in every believer; see *The*

Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus, 159. Nayler did not believe he was the historical Christ reborn, as Damrosch's study shows. Damrosch focuses on the symbolic dimensions of Quaker doctrine, but I am more interested in the literal aspect of Nayler's interpretation. To go from believing that "Christ is in all" to re-creating the entry to Jerusalem (with the whole supporting cast, from four-legged beast to singing attendants) enacts a rather literal sense of what it means to be Christ-like. The nature of the believer's identification with Christ, and indeed, any biblical figure was not exclusively a Quaker problem, in any case. Readers have long noted that the classically-inclined Jesus of *Paradise Regained* recalls Milton himself; Milton's "impersonation" of Christ signals a non-literal identification available well beyond Nayler's immediate circle. As I shall discuss below, the problem of identification is a central interpretative burden of spiritual autobiography.

⁵³ This triangulation of the Cambridge Platonists between enthusiasm and Hobbesian thought has been treated in Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, see ch. 5.

⁵⁴ Nathanael Culverwel, *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* (1652), 90.

⁵⁵ Timothy Goodwin, *The Life and Character of...the Late Dr. Edw. Stillingfleet* (1710), 86-87. Quoted in Yolton, *John Locke*, 89.

⁵⁶ See Ernest Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism*, ch. 1; Jules David Law, *The Rhetoric of Empiricism: Language and Perception from Locke to I.A. Richards*; and Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 259-267.

⁵⁷ Locke significantly refers to the figure of the blank slate in hypothetical, non-committal terms, and expressly acknowledges its conventionality: "Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper..." (II.1.2.).

⁵⁸ From Joseph Addison to Lord Kames, Britain's leading aesthetic theorists would continue to uphold the privilege of sight long after Locke's epistemological intervention. (As my reading of Defoe will suggest, the haptic aftershocks of Lockean thought are for the most part registered outside mainstream aesthetic theory). Kames, for example, associates the eye's serene seclusion from objects of sense with the refined pleasures of the "fine arts"—accessible, above all, to the connoisseur's gaze. Sight's sophistication and the cultivation of aesthetic taste, in turn, are linked to the exquisite attunement of the moral sense; see the introduction of his *Elements of Criticism*. Addison, however, follows Locke more closely: even as he celebrates vision as the portal into the "pleasures of the imagination," he holds onto the intimacy of touch by recasting sight as a mode of feeling. The sight, he writes, "may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of Touch, that spreads it self over an infinite Multitude of Bodies...and brings into our reach some of the most remote Parts of the Universe" (*The Spectator*, no. 411; 4:536).

⁵⁹ I have found Adela Pinch's work helpful for thinking through this connection; see her *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*, 18.

⁶⁰ Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, 48. Locke thus participates in an ongoing early modern dialogue between what Robert Mayer has called the tradition of "humanist modern history," with its rhetorical roots and interest in instructive historical wisdom, and more antiquarian (or, indeed, more "scientific") approaches to history that hew more closely to documents and archives—that is, matters of fact. Mayer's point is that both approaches attained the status of historical knowledge in the early modern period. This chapter does not pursue the history-fiction link in depth; it is enough to note here Locke's sense that the reading, if not writing, of history should transcend matters of fact. See Robert Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe*, 25.

⁶¹ For a rather different reading that sees Locke dispensing with these limits, however, see Ethan H. Shagan, “Daily Bread: Ideas of Sufficiency in Early Modern England.”

⁶² Not coincidentally, the novel is a genre that wants to do the work of history. Robert Mayer has argued that the “life-histories” of such writers as Richard Baxter, the Earl of Clarendon, and Lucy Hutchinson presage Defoe’s literary practice by taking for granted the intermingling of the personal, the public, and the polemical; see Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel*, 77. I am inclined to take the argument a step further: in the age of tender conscience, the writer of history asserted epistemological authority by making explicit her affective investment in its conflicts and outcomes.

⁶³ Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2:142; Klaus P. Fischer, “John Locke in the German Enlightenment: An Interpretation,” 438.

⁶⁴ Ana M. Acosta, “Spaces of Dissent and the Public Sphere in Hackney, Stoke Newington, and Newington Green,” 6.

⁶⁵ Isaac Watts, *Horae Lyricae*, 119. The first edition of Watts’ poems was published in 1706.

⁶⁶ See N.H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, ch. 1, esp. 31-32.

⁶⁷ A pair of nineteenth-century historians noted that “in those evil days, when it was much safer to be a malefactor than a dissenter; and when a dissenting tutor was the most obnoxious being in England to the rules both of church and state, [Charles Morton] was harassed by spies, by informers, by justices and persecutors... At last, wearied out with a long succession of such vexations, and seeing no end to trouble... he bid adieu to his native country, and sought sanctuary in New England.” See David Bogue and James Bennett, *History of Dissenters, from the Revolution in 1688 to the year 1808*, 2:44-45. Quoted in Acosta, “Spaces of Dissent,” 7.

⁶⁸ As noted by the alumni Samuel Wesley (better known as the grandfather of John and Charles Wesley) in *A Letter... Concerning the Education of the Dissenters in their Private Academies*, 4-5. Ilse Vickers, *Defoe and the New Sciences*, has done much to situate Morton’s thought within the pedagogical and intellectual cultures of his day; see esp. ch. 3. See also Lew Girdler, “Defoe’s Education at Newington Green Academy.”

⁶⁹ Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, 218-220. Quoted in Girdler, “Defoe’s Education,” 579.

⁷⁰ See Girdler, “Defoe’s Education,” 579-80.

⁷¹ In a mock dialogue, Charles Gildon imagines Defoe laying claim to fictional creatures that talk back to him and teach him Latin. “Mayn’t I make of you what I please?” D---I asks Crusoe. Note how his macaronic response takes aim at the dissenting conscience, poking fun at both its strangeness or foreignness—its distance from classical analogues—and its propensity to turn against authority: “when you raise Beings contradictory to common Sense, and destructive of Religion and Morality; they will rise up against you in *Foro Conscientiae*; that *Latin* I learn’d in my *Free-School* and *House Education*.” Gildon’s airing of extra-textual or private exchanges between the author and an all-too-lively figment of the imagination recalls the English Civil War’s “publication” of an ostensibly private and very imaginative *foro conscientiae*. See *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Mr. D-- De F-- of London, Hosier*, vii.

⁷² Defoe, *The Present State of the Parties in Great Britain: Particularly an Enquiry into the State of the Dissenters*, 295.

⁷³ Defoe, *The Present State of the Parties*, 302.

⁷⁴ Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life*, 93.

⁷⁵ Defoe, *Review*, 2:195-96. Quoted in Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 94.

⁷⁶ Defoe, *The History and Remarkable Life of... Col. Jack*, 27.

⁷⁷ Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, 13.

⁷⁸ The celebration of innocence as a condition of paradisaic insight is discussed in Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, esp. 34-37.

⁷⁹ Defoe, *The Life, Adventures, and Pyracies of the Famous Captain Singleton*, 256.

⁸⁰ Defoe, *Captain Singleton*, 276.

⁸¹ The tenderness of *amour* was especially insisted on by the tastemakers who introduced French letters into Britain—even more so than the French authors themselves. Among more than eighteen invocations of “tender” or “tenderness” in Haywood’s translation of Boursault’s *Lettres*, many are her own interpolations. “S’il vous échappe de me parler d’amour, après la defense que je vous en ai faite, la conversation ne sera pas longue,” the lady warns the Cavalier in the French original (Edmé Boursault, *Lettres Nouvelles avec Treize Lettres d’une Dame à un Cavalier*, 238). In Haywood’s re-interpretation, the gentleman’s external action (literally, the talk of love) transforms into softer passions—his tenderness: “If you should give the least Hint of the Tenderness you have for me, ...our conversation must not be long.” See Haywood, *Letters from a Lady of Quality to a Cavalier, translated from the French*, 8.

⁸² Without discussing the eroticization of tenderness at length, scholars of the culture of sensibility from Janet Todd to G.J. Barker-Benfield have noted how early eighteenth-century studies of the nervous system helped construct what I think of as another physiological model of tenderness—the sensitive, sensible body pulsating with nervous vibrations. See Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, 17-21; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*; see also Ann Jessie van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context*. One critic, who provocatively begins his discussion of sensibility with Sterne’s “erotic benevolence” argues that it leads, via Romantic authors, into sentimentalism and “chastened forms of sympathetic connection”; see Christopher Nagle, *Sexuality and the Culture of Sensibility in the British Romantic Era*, 5.

⁸³ Here is Uncle Toby on Locke’s *Essay*:

It is a history-book, Sir,...of what passes in a man’s own mind....Call down *Dolly* your chamber-maid and I will...[make] this matter so plain that *Dolly* herself should understand it as well as *Malbranch*.—When *Dolly* has indited her epistle to *Robin*, and has thrust her arm into the bottom of her pocket hanging by her right side;—take that opportunity to recollect that the organs and faculties of perception can, by nothing in this world, be so aptly typified and explained as by that one thing which *Dolly*’s hand is in search of...—’tis an inch, Sir, of red seal-wax.

See Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 2:140. Critics have long noted how Sterne’s fragmented style responds to Locke’s brief discussion of associationism; see, for example, Arthur H. Cash, “The Lockean Psychology of *Tristram Shandy*,” 125-135.

⁸⁴ John Milton, *Paradise Regain’d...to which is added Samson Agonistes*, ll. 915-918.

⁸⁵ Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, ll. 942-945, italics added.

⁸⁶ Defoe, *Mere Nature Delineated: or, A Body without a Soul*, 60-61.

⁸⁷ See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*.

⁸⁸ Thomas Wilson, *A Commentarie Upon the Most Divine Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes*, 379, italics added. Wilson uses the metaphor to distinguish Catholic and Pelagian models of the soul from Protestant, Calvinist ones.

⁸⁹ Joseph Hall, *Contemplations Upon the Principle Passages of the Holie Historie*, 408-409.

⁹⁰ Maximillian E. Novak, "Robinson Crusoe's Fear and the Search for Natural Man," 242.

⁹¹ Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, vi.

⁹² Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, x.

⁹³ Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 35-36.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 93. The Bill for Occasional Conformity was narrowly defeated in 1703; it was debated again in 1704 and passed in 1711.

⁹⁵ Alexander Pope, *Dunciad Variorum* (1729), II.138. See also I.93: "She saw old Pryn in restless Daniel shine."

⁹⁶ The title of Defoe's satire recalls Locke's sharp riposte to Proast: "You are for a shorter and surer way. Take a whole Tribe, and punish them at all Adventures; whether guilty or no, of the Miscarriage which you would have amended; or without so much as telling them what it is you would have them do, but leaving them to find out if they can. All these Absurdities are contained in your way of proceeding; and are impossible to be avoided by any one who will punish Dissenters, and only Dissenters..."; see *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration*, 25.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 124.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 253.

⁹⁹ Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, 232.

¹⁰⁰ I read Moll's conversion—her speedy attainment of tenderness—skeptically, as one of those repentances under duress that Defoe constantly described with disapproval. "The Repentance which is brought about by the meer Apprehensions of Death, wears off as those Apprehensions wear off; and Death-bed Repentance, or Storm-Repentance, which is much the same, is seldom true"; see Defoe, *The Fortunate Mistress: Or, A History...of the Lady Roxana*, 155. For another reading of the redemptive arc of Moll's narrative, see G.A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, 157-162.

¹⁰¹ Defoe, *Mere Nature Delineated*, 60-61.

¹⁰² Starr points out the biblical allusions of Crusoe's vessels in *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, 124-125. He notes Defoe's youthful struggle with being one of the plainer vessels of 2 Timothy 2:20-21 ("in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonor"). Picciotto has further identified scriptural sources for Defoe's imagery. From 2 Corinthians 4:7 to Jeremiah 18, biblical authors depict God as the craftsman responsible for shaping and preserving human forms of clay; see Picciotto, "Circumstantial Particulars, Particular Individuals, and Defoe," 29-54. The influence of Picciotto's essay on this chapter will be obvious.

¹⁰³ Watt, *Rise of the Novel*, 68.

¹⁰⁴ A massively popular genre, the didactic guides might take as their focal point a particular calling (*The Soldier's Monitor*, *The Seaman's Monitor*), a specific demographic (*Advice to a Daughter*, *The Family Instructor*, *The Whole Duty of Man*), or the pilgrimage of life as a whole (*A Help to Holy Walking*, *A Sure Guide to Heaven*). These hortatory works supplied practical and moral advice for the quotidian aspects of life; Defoe transfigures their discrete pieces of advice into extended narrative. See Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English Fiction*, ch. 10.

¹⁰⁵ Thus Addison, who as Defoe knows, is definitely not describing Crusoe's jars: "There is a second kind of *Beauty* that we find in the several Products of Art and Nature.... This consists either in the Gaiety or Variety of Colours, in the Symmetry and Proportion of Parts, in the Arrangement and Disposition of Bodies, or in a just Mixture and Concurrence of all together" (*The Spectator*, 3:281). Even more to the point are Francis Hutcheson's observations on beauty and "rude figures." "What we call Beautiful in Objects, to speak in the Mathematical Style," he writes, "seems to be in a compound Ratio of Uniformity and Variety." He goes on to argue that a square is more beautiful than an equilateral triangle (though the hexagon, with its greater variety, is more beautiful than the square.) In all those forms that have "any considerable *Uniformity* as *Cylinders*, *Prisms*, *Pyramids*, *Obelisks*; ... [these] please every Eye more than any rude Figures, where there is no *Unity* or Resemblance among the Parts"; see Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 16-17.

¹⁰⁶ See Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton, 1965); see also Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and the Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe* (Baltimore, 1966); I should also mention Leo Damrosch, *God's Plots and Man's Stories: Studies in the Fictional Imagination from Milton to Fielding* (Chicago, 1985).

¹⁰⁷ Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ 1 Timothy 1:15

¹⁰⁹ Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 58.

¹¹⁰ I avoid using the term "typology" since it often calls to mind a readily recognizable structure of comparison involving certain correspondences. The possibilities of typological reading, as I understand it, do not just turn on a philosophy of history—the uncertainty in this dynamic reading practice involved choices of readerly identification.

¹¹¹ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 42.

¹¹² If someone else is being tortured while I observe from a safe distance, Smith argues, the immediate pressure of my senses cannot adequately inform me of the victim's suffering. The exercise of imaginative sympathy is needed to bridge this gap between the testimony of my own limited sense impressions and the full experience of someone whose nerve endings are not my own. See Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.I.2. For the purposes of the present argument, I am most interested in Smith's skepticism about empirical pathways to knowledge and his insistently prescriptive, even didactic, reaction: the senses will fail you in the face of another's suffering, so you must use your imagination. I will return to the problem of Smithian sympathy in the epilogue.

¹¹³ Quoted in Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 130. In his letters, Defoe calls the law "a Heathern Word for Power," and described the law through "dozens of images of wheels, gears, twists, and convolutions.... He brooded over the fact that Sacheverell deserved the pillory, while he had been 'wrongfully accus'd'" (Backscheider, 130).

¹¹⁴ See Backscheider's entry on Defoe in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; see also Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 312, 423.

CHAPTER THREE

Creating the *Sensorium Commune*

When the tender conscience intertwines with nerves in the early eighteenth century, it takes on the technically and poetically productive name of the *sensorium commune*. A term first invoked among those working in the early modern sciences, the sensorium (or as it was sometimes called, the sensory) exists between soul and brain, in the realm where natural objects and “metaphorical guiding principles” overlap.¹ The historian of science Karl M. Figlio has convincingly shown that this sensorium—despite its failure to conform to anatomical criteria by which it could be fully known—served as the single most important model of unified consciousness guiding biomedical research into the nineteenth century. By situating the sensorium within an earlier matrix, this chapter offers an account of sensibility that does not set out to explain a “cult” of spontaneous rites (benevolent acts of charity) and communicable signs (tears, sighs, blushes); neither does it conceive of sensibility through the period’s most glamorous pathologies (hypochondria, hysteria). If the sensorium’s emergence presages formulations of nervous distemper, this same unit comes, as I will argue, to be mobilized as the sociocultural framework through which the period’s maladies are treated. Within an experimental tradition accustomed to thinking through live metaphors, the sensorium assumes its precursor’s role in negotiating corporate unity in its public or social forms.

Given that the tender conscience and sensorium alike condense a long history of the *corpus Christi*, contemporary invocations can feel at once cursory and in need of exposition. As this chapter follows the sensorium through its emergence in anatomy and physico-theology, readers will find once more that I treat these metaphors—and the intricate processes of their deployment—as exemplary in enjoining interpretive labors beyond my own. The distance of these figures from narrowly construed modes of political action have kept them out of scholarly discussion; I believe that we are only beginning to understand how powerfully they served as transhistorical units of experience. Their very diffusiveness mediated lay participation in constructions of collective identity. Among these contributors, as I will argue, were scientific practitioners who revealed an innervated sensory and, in advance of cell theory, located the body’s minima in thread-fine fibers. When they turned their microscopes to vegetal life, these experimentalists found more of the same—fibers. As humoral models of the body gave way to solid, mechanistic ones, then, the sensorium’s material substrate drew it once more towards the lowest rungs on the chain of being—towards the living forms that had been celebrated, as earlier chapters noted, for their only apparently passive sensitivity. Once exemplified by bruised reed and sensitive eye, the tender conscience is carried forward into the eighteenth century, assigned a firmer ontology by the anatomists who entwine it with nervous fibers.

A compound of brain and nerves, thought and feeling, the sensorium’s local dynamism was intensified in this period by a more general process of emergence; it was, in other words, still being produced as a scientific object. Experimentalists from Isaac Newton to George Cheyne, as I will show, enter into their own sensories even as they forge others’, and think further about how to cultivate sensoria adequate to newly enlarged wholes, from those of commercial society to the expanded cosmos. For Cheyne, the foremost caretaker of the sensorium whose influence reaches every subculture of polite society in this period (and through the Methodist John Wesley’s dissemination, every corner of England), the body’s vegetal fibers offered a means of regaining paradise; its most pervasive pathologies, however, would require arduous, collaborative treatments. With his patient Samuel Richardson, Cheyne develops a

practice of alternative medicine that takes literary labor—the writing regimens of diagnosis and recuperation—as vital to the sensorium writ large. In the era of tender empiricism, *Pamela's* impressionability would be figured as a means for interlacing the whole of a culture's written expressions and intellectual pursuits into the body of work we know as British literature.

I. From “Soul Science” to “Conscience Science”

In now-standard accounts derived from G. S. Rousseau and others, the nerves that initially integrated soul and body against the threat of mechanistic man, became, in the course of the eighteenth century, markers of social and sexual difference. The soul, I will argue, is not irrelevant to the development of neuroscience, but it is not through disputed theories of matter that nerves arrive at the fore of popular consciousness. They receive sustained attention because of their resonance with affective and political concerns that had been joined in an especially forceful way through the tender conscience. The larger unit of the sensorium linking brain and nerve emerges out of this pre-existing space in the cultural imagination, carrying forward its repository of metaphors. It is not as if early modern anatomists had never encountered nerves, but experimentalists around 1660 suddenly exerted themselves in neurological study in part because they *wanted* to envision humans as feeling bodies. (I will refer throughout to experimentalists not only because the anachronistic term “scientist” presupposes non-existent disciplinary divisions; as Peter Harrison and others have shown, a concept of “experimentalism” makes visible a common method through which spiritual and intellectual knowledge was, more so than any fixed content, produced through lived experience.²) Experimentalist interest in the nerves, I submit, is bound up with both their substance and the phenomenal qualities they prefigure; divaricating fibers Avicenna once described as “soft, pliant, difficult to tear” provided a material basis for open-ended assemblages shot through with feeling.³

A desire to “save” the soul, so to speak, initiates the experimentalist turn in England toward the nerves. To keep pace with mechanistic accounts of the body in the 1660s, Willis—a founding member of the Royal Society—left off working on chemistry to “unlock,” as he put it, “the secret places of Man’s Mind...[to] look into the living and breathing chapel of the Deity.”⁴ The volume that emerges from these studies, the *Anatomy of the Brain* (1664; 1681) would become a foundational text of neuroscience, remaining current for over two centuries. Willis here posits a bipartite soul that corresponds to ancient divisions—the flesh and spirit, the sensitive and intellective aspects. But he’s clearly interested in the lower range of functions, which turn out to be rather sophisticated, possibly even superior. An elevation of the lesser soul, he suspects, recapitulates the usurpation of his times (its newfound alliance with the nobler faculty could yield “sometimes wicked Combinations, troublesome Contests, and more than Civil Wars”), but Willis proceeds anyways.⁵ His experimental account has been informed by larger politico-religious shifts that installed the sensitivity as a core expression of spiritual vitality and a viable means for seeding social connection.

Through his study of comparative anatomy, Willis argues that the soul can’t be confined as Descartes would have it to the pineal gland; it must be distributed along nervous passageways. He imagines an “orgain of feeling,” a place of affective, epistemological, and even sociopolitical intercourse associated with the brain:

The common sensory [*sensorium*] receives the strokes of all sensible things conveyed to this organ by the nerves, and effects their perception. If these sensory impulses are carried on from there into the cerebrum, imagination presently follows sensation.... Here,

namely, as it were *in a more frequented public place* [*in Foro celeberrimo*], the animal spirits concerned with the execution of willed action are directed into the appropriate nerves.⁶

Depending on whether one depends on the authority of Aristotle or Avicenna, the internal senses could include memory, imagination, fantasy, and the estimative faculty for discerning danger. Following Descartes, Willis advances the combinatory work of the *sensus communis* over these others; the sensorium would take up experimentalism's blurred lines of passivity and activity. In his wake, English experimentalists reject starker readings of the mind-body division, but go farther than the French philosopher in allowing the *sensus communis* to make the leap from one of multiple internal senses to the unqualified, general designation for the soul.

Willis continually relies on figurative language to convey the sensorium's integration, especially to counter the mechanistic logic conveyed by Cartesian images like this one, where diagrammatic lines highlight the lone cable of a hardwired body:



Figure 6.
René Descartes, *Traité de l'Homme* (1664)
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

To those of Descartes' readers keen to dispense with a gland-sized soul, reflexes could offer a paradigmatic instance of spontaneous action. If the body's mechanisms could of their own accord heave limbs out of harm's way, they could, at an even more basic level keep the body's tissues and organs in motion. Matter, in other words, might think and act on its own.

This threat of materialism accounts for disputes over Francis Glisson's monistic conception of "energetic substance." The philosopher Henry More was disturbed by Glisson's account of living matter, which derived from the physician's work on liver irritability. For More, self-moving tissue threatened to eliminate both the agential, incorporeal soul and prime mover, paving the way for what he feared as "Atheism and Epicurism."⁷ He looks to the dissenting Richard Baxter for support, but finds the thinker (whom later scholars almost always characterize as "moderate") entirely unconcerned and even citing Glisson's work. At this point, More had cast his lot with Cartesian dualism, seeing the marked divide between spirit and matter as the position best befitting theological defenses of the former. But Baxter protests that he finds no grounds to insist on such a categorical separation. Baxter explains—ten years before Locke's *Essay*—that he knows "nothing at all without the mediation of sense except the immediate Sensation itself, and the act of Intellection, Volition...& what the Intellect inferreth of the like, by the perception of these." If essential distinctions seem to escape Baxter's notice; divine power does not. If God wanted to create "perceptive living matter," he asks, once more anticipating Locke, "where is the Contradiction that makes it impossible?"⁸

Intellectuals had been called to defend the soul's immortality and its form-giving relation to the body since at least the Fifth Lateran Council (1513); the Cambridge Platonist is appalled when experimentalists cast aside what he sees as the most effective stance for doing so. The elderly philosopher understands the dissenter's error in starkly moral terms, publicly regretting

That so good and old a Knight errant in Theologie and Philosophie as Mr Richard Baxter seems to be, should become benighted, as in a wood, at the Close of his daies, in this most horrid and dark Harbour and dismal Receptacle or Rendezvous of wretched Atheists.⁹

Scholars today continue to read philosophical history through More's Spenserian drama of an imperiled soul, and thus emphasize the imagery surrounding animal spirits—those vital traces of a neoplatonic soul and its astral, "flamy" elements. But accounts of this active principle could multiply, and from theorist to theorist, these placeholder elements continually fluctuated, like particle and wave. References to this vital substance can be found in treatises throughout the century, but as early as the 1730s, Cheyne could cast doubt on the existence of such spirits without generating controversy.

Experimentalist indifference towards supposedly critical theories of matter owe, in large part, to the groundwork laid by the conscience. Unlike the soul, the physiological substrate of the tender conscience had never been at issue. Everyone in the 1640s had claimed one; no one worried about where it could be kept. Experimentalists from Locke to Cheyne addressed readers for whom matter imbued with immanent power did not call to mind the most deterministic models of Cartesian mechanism. For decades, the body's mechanisms had been invoked in England as celebrations of spontaneous activity—the reader will recall the sensitive eye twitching faster than thought. A student of Willis as well as Glisson, Locke the practicing physician shares with his more well-known colleagues a vocabulary of animal spirits, traces, and impressions, evocative language that undoubtedly informs the *Essay's* haptic empiricism. Yet Locke leaves aside Willis's efforts to establish a physiology of the soul, and shows impatience with disputes over immateriality that threatened to divide science from medicine and philosophy from experimental religion. For Locke, the phenomenon of consciousness itself—unbound by any particular substance and crucially described as a condition of "Sensibility"—displaces soul

as human essence. Locke's portrayal of resurrection as a restoration to sensibility hints at how far "sensible intelligent Beings" had, among those accustomed to experiencing themselves as consciences, become *innerved* souls (IV.3.6).

Sense had become the basic principle of consciousness, and divine being itself would be reconceived through the sensory's synthesis. Such a transformation would be articulated most memorably by a figure whose place in the discourse of tender conscience has been overshadowed by his mathematical work and, to a lesser extent, his more mysterious alchemical pursuits. But Newton, who had been following Willis's findings, wrote the *Optick's* (1706, 1718) two famous queries in which he conceives of "infinite Space" as God's sensory. Humans need "the Organs of Sense [to transmit impressions] into our little Sensoriums," but God, Newton suggests, apprehends all in an unmediated way: the divine sensorium extends, as it were, throughout the cosmos.¹⁰ Where Willis had described the sensorium as a space of assembly, Newton extends it still further, from the closed room to the infinite universe. God appears here in neither his providential aspect nor more distantly, as the deists' watchmaker, existing within the universal plenum instead as a feeling, impressionable being.

The peculiarity of Newton's suggestion was not lost on continental readers; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz objected that such a sensorium violated philosophical conceptions of God as incorporeal and active. Leibniz fails to register the metaphorical reserves of a conscience-steeped culture that had begun thinking through an innerved body characterized by more than either materiality or mechanical regularity. Though the *Opticks*' last query elaborates the sensory's active powers, Leibniz's charge remains. Newton's Arian tendencies have effectively led him to absorb into the cosmos—and the Trinity's first person—the passivity, even vulnerability, of God incarnate. The *Opticks* thus arrives at a corollary, separated in language but not in thought, and implicit in experimentalist practice: for those who had long noted the unfolding of divine presence in daily life, to experience God was to make him source of—and subject to—experience.

Half a century later, readers find Laurence Sterne's Yorick sinking in raptures at the thought of this "great SENSORIUM of the world"; they grasped the allusion in part because of the popular awareness cultivated decades ago by *The Spectator*, which introduced the sensorium to readers even before Newton's English edition of 1718.¹¹ The *Optick's* queries had first set the Spectator figure musing, rather remarkably, on Nicholas of Cusa. To the coffeehouse public, the fifteenth-century mystic spoke of God's omnipresence and immensity ("he is a Being whose centre is every where, and his circumference no where"). But to Mr. Spectator's horror, the eighteenth-century sky had so enlarged through the Copernican shift and Galilean tube that "all the host of planetary worlds" might now conceivably be "extinguished and annihilated" without altering the cosmic scheme. To the disoriented observer, Newton supplies a "most exalted" conception: space had become infinitely more immense, but so, too, had the human capacity to intuit and mirror the immensity of divine feeling.¹² *The Spectator's* reading of the sensorium—not as consolation but the promise of *omni-sentience*—resonates with the self-conscious renewal associated with the New Science. The brevity of the *Optick's* reflections, like the periodical form itself, serve as invitations not so much to surrender to mystery as to prolong the time of collective thought.

Experimental science effectively brought the tender conscience, once more, into the thoroughfares of mainstream culture. Newton's sensorium, as Mr. Spectator observed, exceeded some of the most profound conceptions then extant of omniscience and infinity, for it envisioned the entirety of the universe shot through with threads of nervous feeling. Like the tender

conscience before it, the sensorium serves as a centripetal term holding multiple referents in constant relation. Their very invocation, in other words, presumes the involution of like entities (vulnerable party and collective respondent, self and Other) without collapsing them altogether. Through their distinctive, grounding conceptions of mutual presence, sensibility becomes the means of apprehending and sustaining shared (and in some sense, paradisaal) grounds. The experimentalist's sensorium does for the cosmos what the tender conscience had done for the political realm—transforming a distant domain of providential order into a living realm constituted by mutual participation.

II. Plant Anatomy

The Sensorium in whom we “live, move, and have our being” could call up the perpetual reconstructions of the Pauline community, but through contemporary popularizers like J. T. Desaguliers, Newtonian mechanics could also be dislodged from the experimental context, and reframed as the benevolent system of “unalter'd Laws” foreshadowing political economy's operations.¹³ One might, with no small degree of violence, assimilate Newtonian mechanics to the Hobbesian commercial society of Bernard Mandeville's maxim: the logic of an autonomous system defies the individual's grasp, but private vice, on balance, inexorably leads to public gain. Mandeville elsewhere characterizes his work as a form of anatomical scrutiny; he wishes only “to make Men penetrate into their own Consciences, and by searching without Flattery into the true Motives of their Actions, learn to know themselves” (*Free Thoughts*, 11). In the *Fable of the Bees*, he burnishes his credentials as a physician; his clear-sighted view of the social whole—the system that prospers economically despite moral challenges to its consumerism and concentrations of wealth—derives from his knowledge of the bodily machine. But if readers expect disenchanting descriptions of society's mechanisms, they find instead the kind of evaluative language that demeans anatomy altogether:

as those that study the Anatomy of Dead Carkasses may see, that the chief Organs and nicest Springs more immediately required to continue the Motion of our Machine, are not...the smooth white Skin that so beautifully covers [the muscles and bones], but small trifling Films and little Pipes that...seem inconsiderable to Vulgar Eyes; so they that examine into the Nature of Man, abstract from Art and Education, may observe, that...his vilest and most hateful Qualities are the most necessary Accomplishment to fit him for the...most flourishing Societies. (“Preface,” A2)

Mandeville begins to borrow anatomy's scopic authority but falls back onto a wholly different set of images linked through modifiers of disgust. It's not obvious why “small trifling Films” and “little Pipes” assimilate to all that is “vile” and “hateful”; in his retelling, veins and fibrils seem like the sewage system on which the civic body depends. Mandeville's total lack of interest in the body's internal motions pushes anatomy towards autopsy, though in his uncurious exposure of “Dead Carkasses,” every exterior rips off to reveal the same thing: selfish appetite. In this approach, particular description in fact adds nothing; the persistence of the larger machine is all that matters.

Decades ago when working through Cartesian thought, Willis had been employed anatomy to seek the body's phenomenal unity. Mandeville finds something strangely reprehensible about utility, but the experimentalist stresses the nerves' integrative function. The soul of his soul, one might even say, is its connectivity. Often described in terms of diffusion,

this soul figures that unbroken, continuous sensitivity that extends into and across bodies, obscuring even the body's division into parts and offices. When Willis thought the soul could be "diffused through the whole Head and its nervous dependences," he set a standard that would guide neurological work from Gottingen to Edinburgh: a century later, the Swiss polymath Albrecht Haller follows him in treating the feeling soul as uncontroversial (*Works*, 78). It is "evident," Haller wrote, "that the seat of the soul must be in the part...in which the soul feels."¹⁴ Haller's concise statement for the *Encyclopédie* (1777) does not venture into contemporary debates about irritability, but his interlocutor in these matters, the Scottish physician Robert Whytt, can assert diffusion in virtually identical terms:

the soul is not confined to an indivisible point, but must be present at one and the same time, if not in all parts of the body, yet, at least wherever the nerves have their origins...it must be, at least, diffused along a great part of the brain and spinal marrow.¹⁵

Willis sought a better figure than the pineal gland (whose very etymology suggests the singular pine cone—as well as the pineapple, as Willis reminded readers) to image elemental, continuous sensitivity. Thus after presenting eighteen chapters on the brain, *The Anatomy* turns to Willis's favorite part of the body, one that yields, as a contemporary translation puts it, "more pleasant and profitable Speculation, than the Theory of any parts beside in the animated Body." With growing excitement, Willis reminds readers first of the originality of what follows ("I have not trod the paths or footsteps of others, nor repeated what hath been before told") before unveiling, in a central organizing metaphor, the ramifying nerves:

These kinds of parts, in respect of the Head and marrowy Appendix, are like a branching stock or imps [that is, offspring] growing out of the trunk of a Tree: for supposing the cortical substances of the Brain and Cerebel are in the place of roots, and that the substances every where medullar are taken for the stock or pith; the nervous germination or budding forth expanded into divarications of Nerves and Fibres, will appear like to many little branches, twigs, and leaves. (*Works*, 102-103)

When readers encounter the sensitive soul in its nervous aspect, then, they find it in strikingly "invegetate" form; those seeing it first in English would have done so alongside publications of Nehemiah Grew's work on plant microscopy. Turned within, the "optic tube" revealed tubule after living tubule. Grew's work—crucially not a botanical study but *The Anatomy of Plants* (1682)—requires further consideration, not only because it stands as one of the first known instances of a specific project funded by a scientific body. I will return to what the historian of science Hisao Ishizuka has called Grew's "fiber body"; for now, it is worth pausing over the experimentalist's pointed depiction of the nerves—"tender stalks," as he describes them elsewhere—as a thicket of bruised reeds.¹⁶ At the phenomenal level, the sensitive plant that troubles the metaphysical order has been so fully assimilated through the conscience that its receptivity assumes the burden of soulfulness.

The advent of this new body—with its nerves ramifying within and across living entities—provoked thinking about public bodies that resonates across the century and beyond the British Isles. Experimental sensibility, as two minor (but powerfully diffused) instances suggest, could draw on the nerves and conscience as interrelated elements for generating public bodies. These were writers searching for alternatives to the traditional chain of being as well as the new

commercial economy with its habits of consumption—of both commodities and the compounding returns of sentiment. For these thinkers, poetic lines link theories of matter to conceptions of participatory citizenship.

In response to the brutal reductions of Hobbesian anatomy, the eventual author of the *First Lines of Physiology* turned to the body, tracing the conscience's lines through the wider world of the Swiss countryside. Haller's celebration of alpine simplicity would lead Immanuel Kant to claim him as "the most sublime of German poets"; echoing through his corpus are the musings of an enthusiastic naturalist: "Is this the world...where more than one Mandeville misconceives the traces of divine goodness?"¹⁷ Thus a writer identified only as "Mrs. J. Howorth" recasts Haller's verse in English prose at the century's end, in her own way entwining experimentalism with a radical culture of sensibility. For the physiologist, nervous fibers called to mind nothing so much as the surging of "another sentiment within us...: it is conscience, the touchstone of our actions."¹⁸ Decades before his well-known work on irritability, Haller's poetry attests to his fascination with that "vigilant sensibility which, easily irritated, alarms the whole body upon the slightest injury, and calls it to its own defence." The sensibility that Haller aligns with Hobbesian self-preservation—that "delicate contexture of infinitely small vessels...the marrow of our fibres, the source of pain, of pleasure, of life itself"—exists alongside what Howorth calls the conscientious impulse of "social love." Experienced as a new dispensation, the sensorium could elude logics of stratification, offering lines through which experimentalists traced continuities apart from natural or cultural accretion. Thus the poem itself replicates the body's "net-work of imperceptible fibres" as it weaves across city rooftops, imagining the social whole in both its unity and internal differentiation:¹⁹

here, a profound philosopher studies the attributes of matter and the nature of the soul by the gleam of his midnight lamp; there the mother of a family directs her attention to...not less important objects,... educating those children which shall become citizens of the state...²⁰

Haller's lines seem tranquil enough. But Howorth—a fellow botanist and friend of James Edward Smith, the work's dedicatee—shared with the Linnean Society's founder an ardent admiration for one of Edmund Burke's sentimental "madmen," Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Alison E. Martin has observed that Howorth's translation reveals an almost "militant stance" towards absolutism; this nervous sensibility—Howorth's upholding of the principle of "social love"—evinces in these lines.²¹ Haller's paratactic verse features only a woman presiding over the house, with children drawn towards the state as civil servants and functionaries ("Ein Weib sein Haus beherrscht und Kinder zieht dem Staat").²² Writing in the wake of the mass uprising that left "le citoyen Louis Capet" dead, Howorth issues a call for the renewed creation of *citizens*.

From soul to conscience, the philosopher's studies culminate in the sensorium's political science, further advancing experimental politics. Inquiry into the integration of no-longer passive senses made existing forms of labor visible, including the political *poiesis* needed to imagine communities in the first place. By envisioning these ties within the sensorium's lines, experimentalists licensed the severance of older bonds, for these would remain in more fundamental links that held bodies at a distance together. When James Harrington had referred in the 1650s to the "Nerve and Ligament of Government," the two fibers could still be taken interchangeably.²³ Among English humanists, as Patricia Parker has shown, the Latin term "nervi" most often translated to "sinews," the veins denoting masculine strength; thus it was

possible to speak of money as the “Nerve of War” and industry as the “principal nerve of a Commonwealth.”²⁴ The period’s vexed experiments with democracy indicate how a sensorium conceived apart from tendons and ligaments incited the polity itself to transformation.

Needless to say, the corporate personhood articulated by traditional invocations of the *corpus Christi* had more or less figured shared feeling, but the sensorium’s unbroken lines of sensitivity—its diffused feeling—could take precedence over the body’s defined members. Proceeding in Harrington’s republican strain, Thomas Pownall’s *The Principles of Polity* (1752) dwells for the most part on the constitutional scaffolding of a commonwealth. But it turns at a critical moment from the legal order to forms of awareness—sense, conscience, consciousness—that authorize it. What the customary form loses in terms of concretely jointed parts, it gains as the replete image of capaciousness:

That the Power of Government may...be extended, and act, and live thro’ the Whole; that the Spirit, not merely the mechanical *Momentum*, may be communicated and deriv’d to all its Members, ‘tis necessary that there be a public Sense, a public Consciousness, a public Conscience. In the same Manner that every Man feels, that each Part of him is a Part of one’s self; so should he feel, that he, the Individual, is a Part of one Whole: As there is but one Consciousness throughout the whole Man, so there should be but one throughout the whole Community: For, as the Unity of Communion...makes the Polity one natural Body, so this one Consciousness makes it one Person, one moral Agent: And as such, it will feel the same moral Sense of Virtue, Truth, and Rectitude...the same Zeal for Public Interest...How this is to be cultivated and regulated...is beyond my present Purpose; ‘tis enough that we see that this is the *Sensorium*, the Vehicle, as it were, of the Soul of Government... (97)

Published in London before Pownall’s departure for Massachusetts (where he serves, in John Adams’ appraisal, as the colony’s “most constitutional and national Governor”), this glimpse of a public person yet unborn calls for shared labor, the pursuit of means for fulfilling ends which must themselves be perpetually remade.²⁵ One could do worse than to identify this fusion of religious, aesthetic, and scientific language as tender empiricism, the discourse that once more summons a citizenry. Where it speaks of feeling, it’s not the language of a self-congratulating sympathy—“I feel *for* you”—the text moves instead towards something like proprioception, the sensory’s ceaseless, almost unthinking awareness of a proximate member.

* * *

To a perhaps surprising extent, experimentalists engaged in scientific pursuits embraced the self-transformations attendant on discovery. The sensorium’s unfolding within the individual was, as I have already noted, amplified in this period by the shared process of its creation. Newton’s youthful experiments offer a striking example of this work, as he tenderizes the sensorium to make it adequate to the infinite. When read as the epoch-making text that unweaves the rainbow, it becomes easy to forget that contemporary readers of the *Opticks* were both fascinated with its findings and the onerous preparations behind them; the mythologizing of genius suggested by Pope’s epitaph (““Let Newton be!’ and all was light”) is only part of the story. Decades after Newton’s death, experimentalists were still thinking about how Newton attained his clarity about vision during what Cheyne called “the greatest stretch of human *Invention* and *Penetration*”—referring not to the *Principia* but the *Opticks*. Throughout these

studies, as Cheyne informed readers, Newton's acuity had been enhanced by deliberate abstemiousness—he had turned into a fellow vegetarian, taking only bread, water, and sack.

Newton himself hinted at the great lengths to which he would go to sensitize the organs of perception. In what appears a grotesque as well as deeply moving experience, the young Newton underwent a tenderizing process that he recalls some twenty-five years later to Locke. He did not keep up with many correspondents; Locke was an exception. In the 1690s, the two were exchanging notes about biblical interpretation (“are you certain that the Ancient of days is Christ?”) and church history (“Miracles of good credit, Newton reports, “continued in the Church for about two or three hundred years”); Newton subsequently describes experiments he made while still an undergraduate at Cambridge.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, given his work on sense perception, Locke has been wondering about the other internal senses and their relation to recent theories of vision: how might the mind's eye—the faculties of imagination and fancy—relate to sense impressions? Without giving any definitive answers, Newton supplies an anecdote, raising yet “another [question] about the power of phansy which,” he writes, “I must confess is too hard a knot for me to untie” (*CJL* 4:290). At one level, the experimentalists are looking into efficient causes and setting boundaries to the project of inquiry. But the particulars that Newton adduces underscore the experimental reaches of Locke's query, and their impact on the sensorium as a whole.

To put it briefly: Newton recalls an instance between 1665-66 when he becomes temporarily blind after gazing at the sun's afterimages. Newton prepared beforehand for this encounter: “I had been in a dark room for two or three hours,” he records in his Trinity notebook, “and my eyes were made tender thereby...”²⁷ When he returns to the dark after looking at the sun, he finds that he can recall the sun's brilliance at will, and proceeds to do so again and again. Newton's experience thus far can be read in line with experimentalist assumptions: sense impressions worth having so reshape the sensory organ that perception itself entails memory. Experimentalist practices of memory—the textual, or here, imaginative visitation—underwrite the vivid force of Lockean reflection and the jointly reproductive and creative capacities that Zsolt Komáromy and others have noted. In any case, Newton explains that “at length...[these exercises] made such an impression on my eye that if I looked upon the clouds or a book or any bright object I saw upon it a round bright spot of light like the sun” (*CJL* 4:289). This marvelous power soon proves incapacitating: “in a few hours time,” he recalls, “I had brought my eyes to such a pass that I could look upon no bright object with either eye but I saw the sun before me, so that I durst neither write nor read” (*CJL* 4:290).

After a few days, Newton's sight—and his estrangement from the written word—resolves. But as Newton's full account would have it (the recovery narrative equals the former experiment in length), the most significant experience lies in recovery itself:

...to recover the use of my eyes [I] shut my self up in my chamber made dark for three days together and used all means to divert my imagination from the Sun. For if I thought upon him I presently saw his picture though I was in the dark. But by keeping in the dark and imploying my mind about other things I began in three or four days to have some use of my eyes again and by forbearing a few days longer to look upon bright objects recovered them pretty well, though not so well but that for some months after the spectrum of the sun began to return as often as I began to meditate upon the phaenomenon, even though I lay in bed at midnight with my curtains drawn. (*CJL* 4:290)

Besides the jarring intrusion of the masculine pronoun (“I thought upon *him*”), the text’s hedging on circumstantial details attracts attention: Newton stays in the dark first “for three days together,” though perhaps more like “three or four days,” with a few additional ones before recovery. To remain in the dark for just a few or even four days would be to risk losing the allusion to Pauline experience. As Newton pushes at the bounds of permissible inquiry, in other words, his experiments point to that other seeker for whom zeal ended in unutterable insight: overwhelmed by a “light from heaven,” the apostle who had been “breathing out threatenings and slaughter” collapsed on the road to Damascus, remaining blind for three days before the scales famously fell from his eyes (Acts 9:1-3).

Keen to probe perceptual limits, the Cambridge experimentalist continually sought piercing light that recalls these celestial sources. From around the same time, Newton’s undergraduate notebook recounts the following experience:

I took a bodkin [a long pin or needle]...& put it betwixt my eye & y^e bone as neare to y^e backside of my eye as I could: & pressing my eye wth y^e end of it...there appeared several white darke & coloured circles.... Which circles were plainest when I continued to rub my eye wth y^e point...²⁸

Together, these trials condense much about the eye’s impressionability and its experimental fascination. The bodkin’s pressure, for one, approaches the Miltonic fantasy of haptic vision, the angelic perception in which feeling and vision coincide; it effects, too, those tubular transpositions by which the light of distant bodies presses near, created as it were through the needle’s point. Most strikingly of all, Newton literalizes the pricking of conscience: nearly sensitized to the point of no return, the optic nerve penetrates with the radiance that had felled the apostle himself.

Newton’s experience possesses dubious status as evidence of miracles, though it does in some tacit way seem to confirm for him the Pauline account. Given their indeterminate relation to epistemological standards then under discussion (one can almost feel Locke struggling with this manifestation of “inner light”), Newton remained relatively quiet about these episodes. There is no question, though, that this inquiry gestured past virtual witnessing to its identificatory possibilities. Amid their cultivations of tenderness, these “men of science” grasped their public role as visionaries, and their potential to serve as mediating figures of knowledge as well as sympathy and identification. No one, as we will see, understood this more than the vulnerable doctor Cheyne, who tried without success to join Newton’s inner circle, but ultimately embodied this experimentalist—one is tempted to say Newtonian—role more fully than the man himself. Whether circulated in manuscript or published abroad, experiences like Newton’s created experimentalists who returned, reading both with and against the Royal Society’s motto, “Nullius in verba,” to tests of the divine Word. In this case, Newton’s replication of the miraculous illuminates everyday marvels: besides the wonder that pricked and prodded eyeballs can perform all the *Opticks* describe in the first place, these experiences disclose the wonder that they do so among unfathomable spectra of perceptual intensity.

Experimentalists may have suspended the hierarchical correspondences that made for a more concentrically-ordered and perhaps “intuitive” universe. But it has not been noted nearly often enough that such suspensions entailed returns to familiar frameworks—including that of Restoration itself. The experience of radical suspension persists through such returns, endlessly repeated at the metaphor’s microlevel where the capacity to identify as well disengage remakes

history through the literal figure. The constant shifts that make the tender conscience at once resistant to iconographic depiction and the subject of proliferating similes interferes with more clean-cut readings of modernity's subject-object divide: from the bruised reed to neural networks, figures of conscience work by signifying, with varying emphases, the reversible interchange between injured party and responsive agent. Romantic elucidations of symbol as well as allegory trace back to these early modern experiments in positing shifting, overlapping networks of identity; one might even understand this experimentalist fluency through Pauline conceptions of grace, whereby insistent demarcations of legal boundaries generate new modes of transgression and intimacy.

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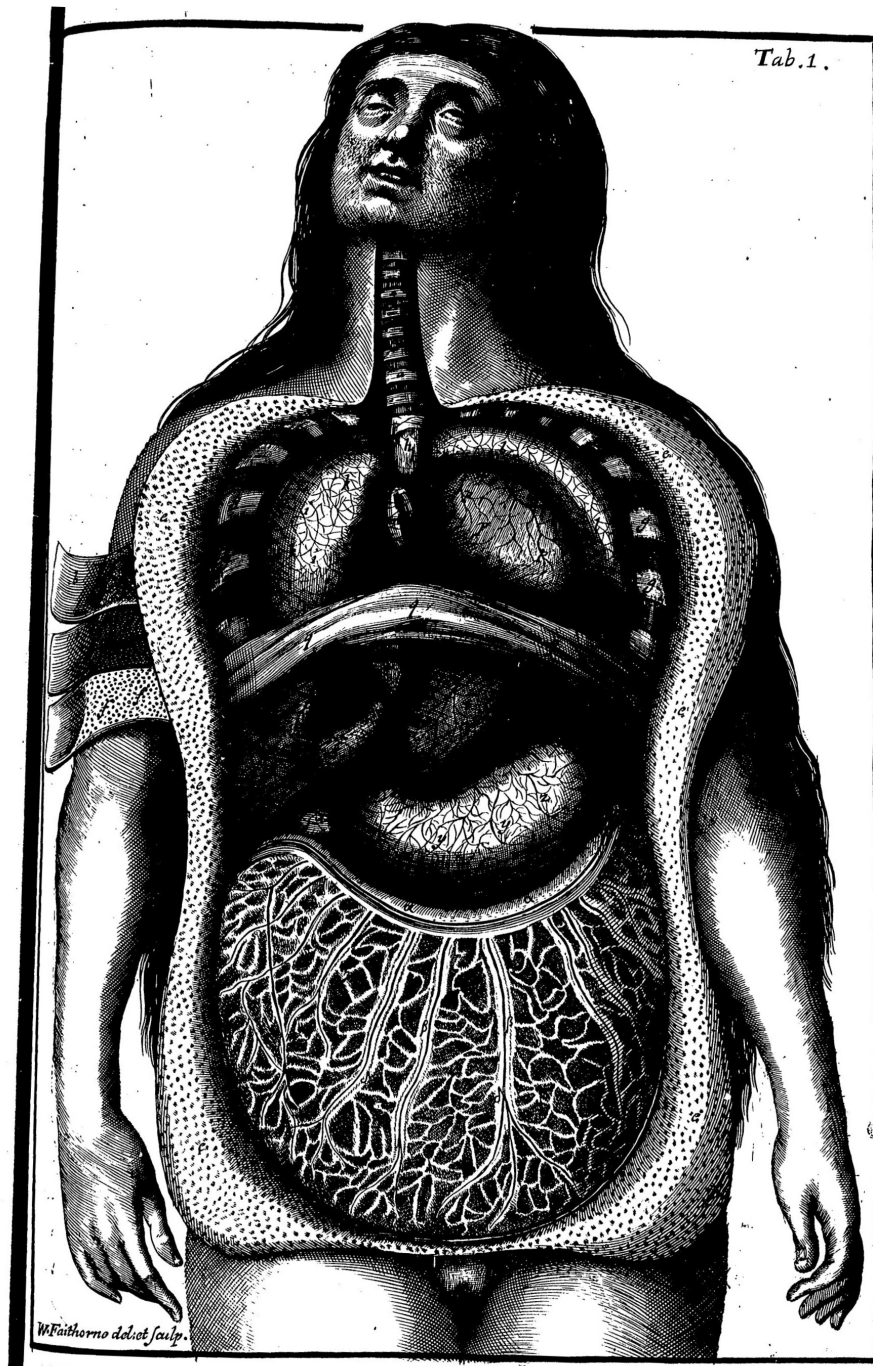
Grew's *Anatomy of Plants* maps one borderland where vegetal life outgrows its traditional correspondence with embryonic or nutritive states into a more fundamental identity with the sensorium as a whole. In an anticipation of cell theory, the dissenter—who joins the Royal Society as one of its rare and sporadically-funded research fellows—notes that plants have organs every bit as complex as those of animals. The elemental fibers of plants, Grew proposes, materially constitute animal being at every developmental stage. “An *Animal* is a *Plant*,” he writes pithily, “or rather several *Plants* bound up into one *Volume*.” As observer merges with object of study, the book of nature transfigures as a whole. “We are come ashore into a new World...,” the microscopist marvels. “It may be, that some will say, into another *Utopia*.”²⁹ Grew's project invites readers to experience the body and its macrocosm as poets dared to imagine them; his lens reveals anew the epic vision of “paradise within.” Having passed out of their ordinary state without acquiring the bestial changes that befell other creatures, plants—the gently striving, non-rapacious forms of life—bore a special claim to innocence that could now once more be located within. Milton's plea (“Celestial light/ Shine inward... There plant eyes”) receives its experimental due as optic fibers thicken into paradisaal matter, and the forms of life that so often appear to do next to nothing become the basis for active sensitivity.

Through Grew's work, as Ishizuka has argued, the longitudinal fiber edges out globules and glands to serve as the body's fundamental unit around the turn of the century. When one of Newton's collaborators remarks that “*Vision* can be no way better performed then by the *Fibres of the Retina*,” he is acknowledging the explanatory purchase of this corporeal unit.³⁰ And as the musings of *The English Malady* (1733) reveal, such fibers lent unprecedented unity to the body's many textures:

the Hair seems to be only some of the fleshy Fibres lengthened outwards and hardened, at least they seem to be of the same Kind and Nature, with the other Fibres, consist of a great many lesser Filaments, contain'd in a common Membran, and are solid, transparent, and Elastic...³¹

The body's insides, Cheyne observes, had lately diversified into “*Veins, Arteries, Lymphaticks, Nerves, Fibres, Tendons, Ligaments, Membrans, Cartilages, Bones, Muscles, and Glands* discovered in every Animal... [through the] *Microscope*” (EM 92). The same basic fibers that by “*Plicatures, Foldings, Twistings*” could lengthen into hair and ossify into bone successively enlarged, in an analogy to plant growth, from “seminal Animalcules” to animal; fibrous growth, then, becomes a matter of combining and strengthening to optimal elasticity (EM 97). Of a piece with his utopian scheme for health, Cheyne's preformationism (which might be better termed “fibrogenesis”) asserts less form's telos than filaments' worldmaking malleability.

A semantic web radiates out from these fibers into patterns that anatomists represented as “Natures fine Pictures” and “Monuments of Art.” One of Charles II’s physicians, Samuel Collins, produces *A Systeme of Anatomy* (1685), which extends Grew’s comparative studies into plate after engraved plate of fish and bird viscera. These anatomical images are preceded, though, by the ghastly depiction of a woman between life and death—cut open, with internal organs appearing more lively than she does. The apparently standing figure smiles faintly, her eyes rolling uncertainly upward.



If William Faithorne's engraving does not exactly represent Eve or paradise within, it nonetheless draws twenty-first century readers back to a fountainhead of Western belief and practice. Among the world's medical traditions, the European one looks more "alternative" than any at this point, given its singular propensity to deal thus with the deceased. What could appear desecration assumes a beatific cast, as physicians open the dead to reveal life's vascular sources. The period's anatomical practices reflect one of the incipient paradoxes of conscience science: the same fascination that weaves soul into corporeal fiber accepts its instant dissipation—and the violability of what remains—at death. In the experimentalist defense of anatomy, intact bodies are not needed for resurrection; opened ones promise still-unfolding tutorials on divine craftsmanship.

Within Faithorne's artful framing, the digestive tract that modern observers have come to expect disappears behind a sumptuous display of shared texture. Lungs and stomach are similarly patterned, "beautified with Blood-vessels after a reticular manner." The magnificent, cross-venulated structure beneath turns out to be the abdominal lining—"branched," the anatomist notes, "after the manner of a curious small Network." Collins identifies this membranous layer (which anatomists today recognize as the greater omentum) as the "caul," a term whose various Greek, Latin, and French roots allow it to refer, appropriately enough in this case, to everything from stomach fat to a netted headdress, an "ornamental network" and even a cabbage—the latter a sense still remaining in our word for "cauliflower." Meticulous lines recall the warp and weft of handicrafts described in Grew's anatomy:

The whole *Substance*, or all *Parts* of a *Plant*, so far as *Organical*...consist of *Fibres*....*Tacked* or *Stitched* up close together into One Coherent Piece. Much after the same manner, as the *Perpendicular Splinters* or *Twigs* of a *Basket*, are, by those that run in and out *Horizontally*. And the same *Horizontal Fibres*, being still further produced into the *Barque*, they there compose the same *work* over again (only not so *open*) as in the *Pith*.

SO THAT the most unfeigned and proper resemblance we can at present, make of the whole *Body* of a *Plant*, is, To a piece of *fine Bone-Lace*, when the Women are working it upon the *Cushion*, for the *Pith*, *Insertions*, and *Parenchyma* of the *Barque*, are all extream Fine and Perfect *Lace-Work*.³²

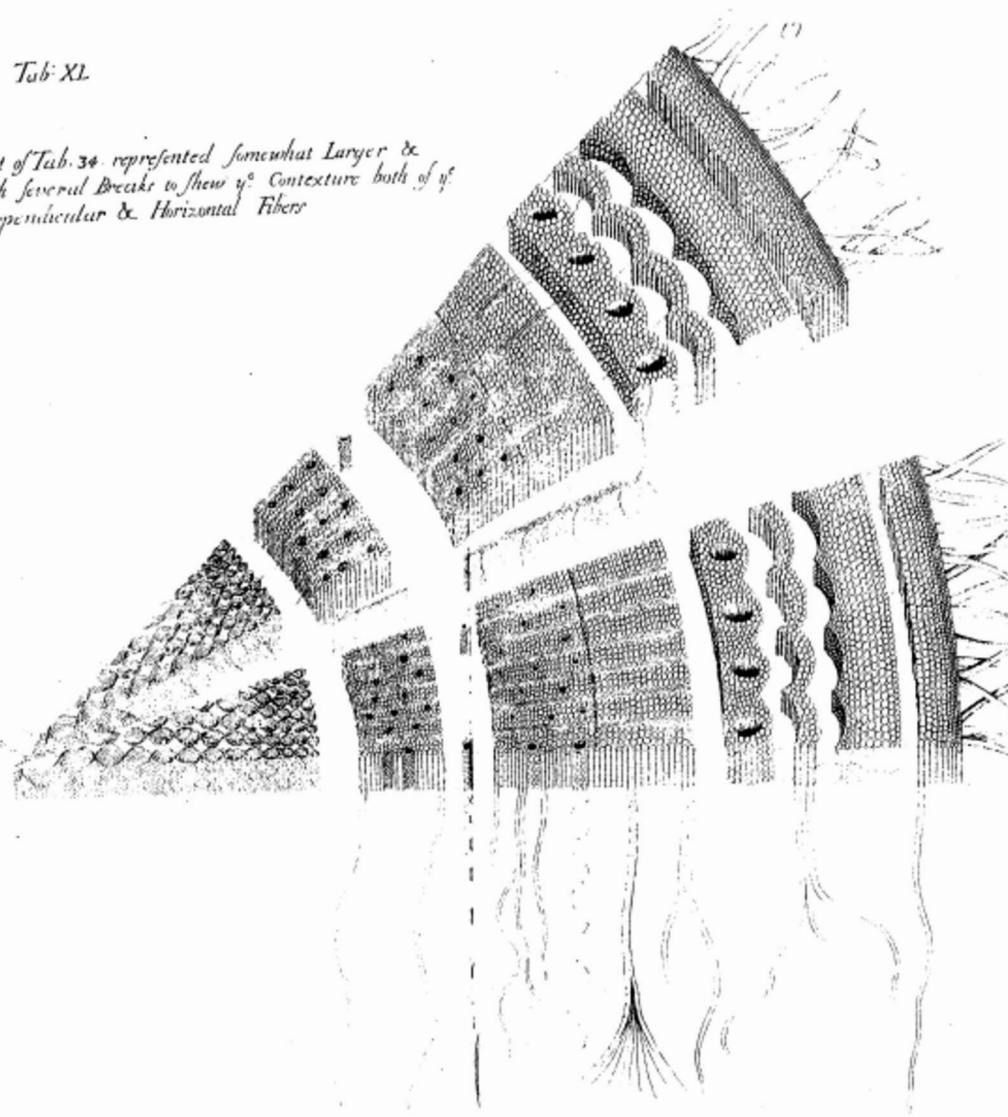
When Calvin reads Genesis' description of God clothing Adam and Eve, he had insisted on the author's linguistic accommodation: we are not literally to take God as "a Tawer [tanner] of skinnes, or a Tailer," much less "a servant to sew clothes."³³ Experimentalists are not so sure. Their very endeavors reflect what Picciotto has shown to be an extensive transvaluation of artisanal labor; Grew's preface thus acknowledges what might be "treasonable" about his similes, even though he can't stop making them. Experimental ideals of productivity invited readers to find in Genesis the unexpected mimesis in which divine making dovetails with fig-leaved attempts. After the Fall, God essentially effects a secondary creation, refashioning coverings to fit new bodies; textile work thus emerges as a final connective, unifying errand at the edge of paradise.

In *The Anatomy's* opening pages, Grew announces a contrast that legitimates his governing simile: divine and human workmanship can be compared since lens technology makes clear just how far the former outstrips the latter. As he explains, "one who walks about with the

meanest Stick holds a Piece of Natures Handicraft, which far surpasses the most elaborate Woof or Needle-Work in the World.”³⁴ The experimentalist relishes those counterintuitive revelations in which objects close to hand, from the journeyman’s staff to the fruit he gathers, break down under magnification into impossibly fine artifacts. The dissenter’s levelling abjection (“be like the plant”) takes on unexpected grandeur when both leafy offshoots and branches—the subject of the work’s most meticulous engraving—consist of gossamer strands all the way through.

Tab: XI.

Part of Tab. 34 represented somewhat Larger & with several Breaks to shew y^e Contexture both of y^e Perpendicular & Horizontal Fibers



One must keep in mind that Grew presents these abstract patterns within a genre that encompasses Vesalius' *memento mori* and Collins' vegetal woman—that is, as anatomical representation. He leaves much unsaid about the utopian dimensions to which he earlier alluded, though there is no reason to imagine that woody stems disclose anything less than their elaborate human counterparts. In their blend of the natural and artificial, Grew's cross-sections suggest more immediately how virtuosi produced images of structured life that found their way into cultural domains from poetry to landscape design. But experimentalists searching into the fiber origins of life are beginning to uncover, too, the material basis for nerve networks theorized by Haller and Pownall. Grew's work supplies the sociopolitical imagination with a vision of unlikely coherence, a non-hierarchical composite in which the core appears no less carefully wrought than periphery, and in which immanent growth appears every bit as labor-extensive as artificial grafting. Rather than forming a closed circuit, as some pie to be apportioned, geometrically-bundled threads represent starting points—sites awaiting extension through longitudinal as well as latitudinal reinforcement.

To some contemporaries, natural history carried out in the “physico-theological” spirit was a strange beast, neither fish nor fowl—that is, bad religion and bad (or useless) science. It seemed a far cry from the Baconian call for charitable labor that could provide for the “relief of man's estate,” and fit poorly with more popular expectations that science, as ventriloquized by Jonathan Swift, should raise “two Blades of Grass...where only one grew before.”³⁵ Mordechai Feingold has argued that science's physico-theological orientation reflected clergymen's needs to rationalize their extracurricular pursuits, though it seems more likely that the unity and breadth of experimentalist interests raised the problems expressed by what we can call Harvey's dilemma. Concerns about the practical value of knowledge to guide souls and save lives touched off larger discussions about the relation of clergymen to science—and of devoted “men of science” to medicine. In an unmistakable swipe at Grew, who wrote *The Comparative Anatomy of the Stomachs and Guts* as well as a plant anatomy, one contemporary text denounces “Anatomical Physicians” who spend “seven years upon a Hedge, Ditch, or Banksside, to enquire for new Faces of Plants and Herbs” when they aren't thrusting entrails “through a Microscope...[and publishing] whatever false appearances are glanced into their eyes.”³⁶ Not exactly a pillar of the medical profession himself, Gideon Harvey continues onto an anecdotal warning, his tale of the waylaid physician: when a doctor stops midroute to catalogue a butterfly's “admirable Structure, Shape, Organs, and colours,” his waiting patient, and presumably the butterfly, dies.³⁷ Even apart from the troubling premise of Harvey's dilemma—the false choice he forces between basic science, physico-theology, and medicine—physicians like Sydenham and Locke expressed concern over the attractions of microscopy and anatomy. Locke worried (and not unreasonably given the advent of anatomical theater) that experimentalists cultivating a devotional gaze to begin with could end in idolatrous stupor—creating “new superficies,” as he put it, “for our selves to stare at.”³⁸

III. Alternative Medicine

For all its advances, experimental science at the turn of the century had yet to deliver massive therapeutic windfalls; with the new epidemic of hypochondria, vapours, and other nervous disorders, more prosperous segments of society found, to their disappointment, that they felt rather worse. It was unclear how conceptions of the “good physician”—the ones Stanley Fish placed at the heart of seventeenth-century writing—could adapt to the influx of knowledge from the life sciences and survive as more than a literary topos. Experimentalists confronted basic

questions about the future of “physic” as well as the moral underpinnings of emerging epistemological and sociopolitical structures: how should the responsibilities of medical care be shared and defined? If the English Hippocrates wondered who physicians were as a group, the man derided as the “Great Fat Doctor of Bath” pressed on to more searching questions about how health should be understood in the first place, alongside a broader set of cultural pursuits.

To characterize the Scottish doctor as a canny proponent of fad diets is to miss everything about how he mobilizes all of experimentalism’s resources when they threatened to pull apart and elude the layman’s grasp. Cheyne is virtually alone in his comprehensive attempt to synthesize the latest scientific findings to the treatment of experimentalism’s new body, and his towering stature as a caretaker of the sensorium can be measured by the otherwise puzzling fact that intellectuals who would refuse each other’s company—Alexander Pope, Robert Walpole, William Law, John Wesley, Samuel Richardson, and even possibly David Hume—sought him out in his lifetime. This concluding section is less interested in medicine’s professionalization than those alternatives, paths charted if not taken, that regarded literary practice as integral to individual and collective constructions of health. Where medicine went in this period, literature and religion followed. And when “medical men” considered the full extent of their practice, they wrote prescriptions for more writing.

Every health care practitioner in the era of “medical pluralism” could look like a sect of one when quacks, mountebanks, barber-surgeons, apothecaries, and doctors alike tended the “sick-trade.” The doctor praised as the English Hippocrates nevertheless stands out, a medical sectarian among sectarians whose contributions seemed especially unusual. Thomas Sydenham was lauded as much in his own day for what he rejected (bloodletting in smallpox) as what he advanced (Cheyne cites his authority when recommending exercise and a milk regimen). A contemporary thought that the doctor had been “freed from [a medical education] by suffering our best Writers to remain untouched, unstudied”; the poet-physician Richard Blackmore suspected that Sydenham arrived at his methods by doing “directly contrary in all Cases to the common Method then in Fashion among the most eminent Physicians.”³⁹

But Sydenham’s lifelong assault on convention reflects no merely contrarian or individualist spirit; it began with an unofficial apprenticeship amid the wounded in Civil War. When he later articulates the physician’s duties, Sydenham writes both as one with Harvey’s dilemma in mind and one who had taken up arms against the Royalist cause not once but twice; at times, his sense of the physician’s calling seems indistinguishable, even through translation, from the revolutionary’s conscience:

A murderous array of disease has to be fought against, and the battle is not a battle for the sluggard. Day by day, there is combat against the life of man, and there is neither truce nor quarter. (*Works*, 1:267-68)

Sydenham’s epithet derives, above all, from his rewriting of the Hippocratic oath for the era of tender conscience. The former officer goes beyond the ancient injunction (“do no harm”), concluding the last of four powerful directives with an experimentalist charge: without ever forgetting that they, too, will one day be fellow sufferers, physicians must relieve patients “more tenderly and with affection” (*teneriori cum affectu*). The doctor possesses a moral duty, Sydenham argues, to cultivate conscientiously tender affections, and to understand his authority as the work of joint authorship.

Thus midway through a text dense with observations, Sydenham breaks off suddenly, announcing that he does not know how to stop the course of agues. He challenges anyone who does know to take up the pen:

if a Man can be found, who knows...I think him oblig'd in Conscience to discover a thing so much to be desir'd by Man-kind; and if he does not do it, I count him neither a good Citizen, nor a prudent Man; for 'tis not the part of a good Citizen, to keep that to himself, which may be so great a Benefit to Man-kind; neither is it the part of a prudent Man, to deprive himself of that [divine] Blessing he may reasonably expect...if he makes it his business to promote the publick Good.⁴⁰

Locke's favorite mentor—the tender subject, one might say, who makes Lockean liberalism imaginable in the first place—repulses those who would reduce every other doctor into a business rival. There is no place in Sydenham's polity for the proprietary cures that fuel the competitive ignorance of the marketplace. More than any single piece of knowledge, Sydenham's reputation derives from his strenuous calls for the shared labor of medical nonconformity.

* * *

The author of *The Fables of the Bees* styled himself a successor to “Speculative *Willis* and practical *Sydenham*” even as he derided the moralizing ethos that ran afoul “enlightened” reason. “The Men of Sense of our clear-sighted Age,” Mandeville argued, “are wiser than to expect... Heroick flights of self-denying Virtue from their fellow Creatures” (*A Treatise*, xiii). In the same year his grumbling hive rose to public attention, a forceful refutation that doesn't acknowledge Mandeville or his maxims at all issued from an unlikely source. A doctor who, like Mandeville, treated chronic illness and nervous distempers, Cheyne had previously published on fever and gout. This time, his *Essay on Health and Long Life* (1724) asked readers to imagine an entire way of life joining health, in its most robust sense, to utopian aims. Writing from the last quarter of the century, Hester Lynch Piozzi conveys in her arch and witty way the excitement from decades earlier, when Cheyne treated readers to a heady blend of Scottish mysticism and native millenarianism; her diary's reflections nonetheless suggest just how moving his recommendations could be:

Few Books carry so irresistible a Power of Perswasion with them as Cheyne's do; when I read Cheyne I feel disposed to retire to *Arruchar* in the Highlands of Scotland—live on Oat bread & Milk, and bathe in the Firth of Clyde for seven Years; and I do partly believe that was I to take up that impracticable Resolution...I should last a healthy Woman to a Hundred years old—Absence of all Passions, Fish now & then, but a continual Diet of good Seeds & Milk, would with a little Bark for chewing, with Rhubarb if Occasion arose, give one amazing Strength.⁴¹

No less than the Ossian cycle, the enticing challenges of Cheyne's texts read as epic romance: in the solitude of medical fantasia, the physician figure drops out entirely, and Piozzi turns what could be placid routine—eating, bathing, retiring, even chewing—into bracing pursuits that might just remake conceptions of human vigor.

Cheyne's popularity owed to his expansive effort to unify new knowledge in what some feared to be its increasingly separable mechanistic, affective, and spiritual aspects. His

pedagogical intuitions in this respect are exemplified by his treatment of celestial mechanics: harmonizing Newton's sensorium with gravitational attraction, Cheyne suggests in his lesser-known philosophical works that slighter, human masses are analogously drawn from themselves towards a divine center.⁴² An early work on fluxions—imprudently published before Newton's own—resulted in permanent estrangement; Newton's influence nevertheless continued to loom large in Cheyne's work. His authorial trajectory can be charted along a Newtonian progression that begins with mathematic principles and passes into the *Optick's* queries. Cheyne had first sought to calculate blood volume in relation to variables of intake and excretion. Two decades later, he abandons equations, seeking instead more practical principles of being that nonetheless stand as laws on the order of universal gravitation. For the rest of his life, he never strays from advising readers about these fundamental matters of bodily input and output—the universal principles, in other words, of consumption and exertion.

Given what experimentalists had revealed about a fiber body, it seems almost too easy to call the doctor an advocate of vegetarianism. He sought no less, after all, than to rebuild paradise from inside out, replenishing the body's fibers through plant-based foods and unfermented drink. The longevity of the world's first inhabitants, Cheyne observed, derived in part from their habits of consumption; by turning from indulgence, the gluttonous few might regain their forebears' innocence and share in the health of their laboring countrymen. (Those who lived on a “plain simple diet,” Cheyne noted, were usually more robust than their counterparts in high society.)⁴³ Among the idle rich, then, simulated labor was needed to produce “fitness” in its sociocultural as well as physical sense. The tubular body Cheyne envisions shares properties with both Mandeville's pipelines and Latitudinarian lute strings; the fiber body, however, must be continually reconstructed, kept in proper tone and elasticity through regular exertion.

The period's alternative medicine thus responds, in a remarkably thorough way, to anxieties about conduct and cohesion in the modern age. Given their access to traditional remedies and the latest medical texts, eighteenth-century “patients,” as Nicholas Jewson and others have shown, were far from passive; the well-heeled among them, in particular, considered themselves patrons, seeking services from those whom they could consult as partners. Cheyne's interstitial position would prove instructive to novelists and evangelicals alike: beholden to wealthy clients, hovering between class lines and occupational boundaries, he began assailing aristocratic vices anyways. His call for consumer restraint flew in the face of fashionable ideas of leisure; combined with his insistence on lowly forms of exercise (not hunting but *walking*), the doctor seemed out of his mind. As Cheyne told it, physicians reading his *Essay*

proclaim'd every where that I was turn'd mere Enthusiast, and resolv'd all Things into Allegory and Analogy, advis'd People to turn Monks, to run into Desarts, and to live on Roots, Herbs, and wild Fruits; in fine, that I was at Bottom a mere Leveller, and for destroying Order, Ranks and Property... (EM iii)

Beyond the content of his advice, Cheyne's influence among contemporaries owes to his brazen, earnest way of urging readers to what appeared in equal measure repellent and impossible. Popular reception of his work attested to a possibility that Cheyne's critics did not care to acknowledge: from the future Methodists then at Oxford to fans of Richardson's defiant maid, comfortably situated people could sometimes *want* to be leveler monks.

Cheyne's most startlingly “foreign” suggestion—that the practice of “*Spiritual Love*...[could] not only become the most effectual Means to prevent *Diseases*, but also, the most

of any Thing, promote *Health and Long Life*”—required cooperative labor (*Essay*, 168). Under Cheyne’s direction, the practice of “postal prescribing” becomes exhortation to the rigor that health demands, and patients like Richardson, alert to their own status as health care practitioners, seemed to welcome continual support. Sustained attention rehabilitates as other medicines cannot; more so than acute ones, chronic conditions proved amenable to long-term correspondence. Within such cases, patient writing emerges well in advance of the nineteenth century as the virtual stethoscope that made closely observed conditions known; as an aspect of spiritual health, physical wellbeing correlated to the disclosure of minute details. Sydenham had helped bring experimental observation to the bedside, charging attendants to “collect points of diagnosis from the minutest circumstances”; along these lines, Mandeville urges readers past the “bare recital of different Symptoms confusedly huddle together” by supplying a written dialogue, complete with a model patient who “feelingly describes her own ailments, and Circumstantially relates” a case of hysteria (*Works* 1:16; *A Treatise*, x). Writing in this period was at once the medium of medicine and medicine itself.

Cheyne went further to offer himself as an example in *The English Malady* (1733); he hoped that “The Case of the Author”—a medical as well as spiritual autobiography—might be someone else’s cure. Cheyne had never been one to escape notice. An old rival from Edinburgh thought he embodied all that was repugnant about Scottish identity: “all the Impudence of the North centred in him,” Charles Oliphant complained. The same detractor who privately loathed Cheyne as a “big lubbardly fellow” published reports of his youthful conduct—employed as a household tutor near Edinburgh, Cheyne had been dismissed after repeated bouts of drunkenness that left him vomiting over his pupil.⁴⁴ Cheyne’s biographer Anita Guerrini points out that the doctor never refuted Oliphant’s account; rather, he openly confesses to readers that when he entered London, he endeared himself to its social circles by enlarging already sizable appetites.

Cheyne goes on to chronicle his breakdown, a subsequent spiritual journey, and physical relapses. Around the time he penned the *Essay on Health and Long Life*, the doctor weighed 448 pounds and felt, as he recalled for readers, that he was fighting for his life. When he finally describes his present regimen (milk, bread, cheese, salad) and daily routines (“I rise commonly at *Six*, and go to Bed at *Ten*”), his habits hardly seem like exercises in self-denial: they are the exultant conclusions of a decades-long struggle against bodily necessity (*EM* 361). It was one thing for unlearned mechanics and domestic workers to chronicle life’s mundane and dirty details, but the Bath physician did not then have an audience among such circles:

I AM heartily ashamed, and humbly beg Pardon of my *polite* and *delicate* Readers (if any such should deign to look into this low *Tattle*, contrary to my intention.) I know how *indecent* and *shocking Egotism* is, and for an *Author* to make himself the Subject of his Words or Works, especially in so tedious and circumstantiated a *Detail*. (*EM* 362)

Cheyne obtruded his tedious particulars onto the wider world; he encouraged a growing circle of writers to emulate his candor. When Richardson was a relative unknown, and printer and editor to the “famous Dr. Cheyne,” one finds the doctor cajoling him in correspondence to “be frank with me & all honest Men...for we cannot know one another’s Hearts but by our Tongues or Pens. I speak and think out. I have nothing to conceal, not my Faults and Frailties, let me hear freely and frequently...”⁴⁵ When Richardson the novelist grapples with the death of an associate, Cheyne draws on Pamela’s expressive dashes to spur further writing: “Courage!” he tells the shaken author, “—but be not too Sheepish—open your Heart freely & fully to me of all your

Doubts Puzzles Feelings and Fears” (CSR 112). (Nor could this epistolary consultation remain one-sided; Cheyne correspondingly reports on his own ailments.) As part of his extensive medical program, Cheyne pushed for writing practices that could reshape literate culture around the unwanted bodies and unwieldy plots of personal narrative. Earlier practices of autobiography and regimens of life-writing would become the means to ensure the flourishing of a new sensorium.

Such alternative regimens set the century’s largest literary and religious movement in motion: within a decade, a small group of students went from fasting after reading Cheyne’s *Essay* to addressing thousands in fields and commons around the nation. In the spirit of the doctor’s “shocking Egotism,” one of these students passed from working at an inn (where George Whitefield “washed Mops, cleaned Rooms...[and drew] Wine for Drunkards”) to publishing, before the age of 30, over 400 pages of autobiographical material.⁴⁶ The Methodist movement entailed regimens of writing, and the future novelist was paying attention: when news of the student group broke in London journals in 1732-33, Richardson mysteriously procured John Wesley’s defense of the “Oxford Methodists,” and without waiting for permission, edited and published it.⁴⁷ These students had ties to the old dissent that they did not care to advertise: the parents of John and Charles Wesley, the brothers who spearheaded the Oxford movement, had been raised in dissent before rejecting the nonconformist fringe for the Anglican center. These Oxford sons, then, were not unlearned conventicle-goers; they should have known better than to flaunt low enthusiasms.

The epithet that ultimately adhered to their student movement has most often been linked to members’ precise habits, but the Oxonians who called them “Methodists” were also drawing comparisons to the ancient medical sect. Among the three main medical sects of imperial Rome, the Methodists—like their eighteenth-century revivalist Cheyne—rejected humoral models, tracing disease instead to fundamental conditions of laxity or fluidity within bodily tubes (*poroi*) and corpuscles (*onkoi*). Even more importantly, ancient Methodists challenged time-tested apprenticeship models, allowing doctors to practice after only six months of medical training.⁴⁸ What one classicist describes as the ancient Methodists’ “methodological revolution” fittingly registers the seismic impact of the college students in the 1730s who, amid whispers of slovenly appearance, took to hanging out in prisons with convicted felons. As Cheyne’s printer no doubt recognized, the Methodist renovation of medical and spiritual pathways opened the way for similar bypasses in the *cursus honorum* of literary authorship.

* * *

Following the anonymous publication of *Pamela*, Richardson commented on its reception in letters to Cheyne. The doctor, unaware of his printer’s literary designs, read the work with pleasure at its surprise publication, anticipating that it would “sell vastly” and do “a great deal of Good” (CSR 62). There was no need to conceal his identity, Cheyne thought. Richardson would not be numbered among the Scriblerian dunces; even Pope stayed up all night reading *Pamela*, sent his compliments, and told the doctor—in an aside aimed at Moorfield’s preachers—that Richardson’s work would do “more good than a great many of the new Sermons” (CSR 65). But Richardson confided that the main objection then circulating was that *Pamela*’s author was “too much of a Methodist” (CSR 73). The eighteenth century’s original Methodist was unfazed. He had been so taken by *Pamela*’s conceit that he was already envisioning a co-authored sequel, one that “must,” he surmised, “come through many Hands...” (CSR 147).⁴⁹

This huge collaboration would have included commissioned works of literary criticism alongside a vast survey of English and French works, all to be presented as the contents of Pamela's library: texts of practical divinity, books of natural and political history, travelogues and accounts of "all Countries and Nations," allegorical histories and novels, poetry, and drama (CSR 149). It was only fitting that the absorptive narrator who readily supplied reading material to Mr. B would rise to the challenge of doing so for the rest of Britain. Seeking Richardson's consent for a remedy that could outlast his epistolary medicine, the doctor continued developing this conception until months before he passed away; it would, as he wrote in one of his last letters to the novelist, serve as a "Universal Cure." It is a measure of how thoroughly Cheyne read *Pamela* as a collective production—a development of his own "Case," the Methodist outpouring, and indeed, the whole milieu of spiritual autobiographies, casuistry, conduct manuals, and news periodicals so charted by the likes of G.A. Starr and J. Paul Hunter. Richardson's work came of age in a thriving print market. The novelist was engaged in the era's efforts to organize the production of knowledge, and would serve, after all, as a printer for the Royal Society as well as the Society for the Encouragement of Learning. Richardson's physician accordingly sought to establish his creation as an enduring cultural icon—the impressionable center from which would emanate an encyclopedic account of English letters.

A newly authoritative patient, Richardson takes another course. At a disciplinary crossroads, Samuel Johnson commits to the prestige genre, leaving us with the *Lives of the English Poets*. But Cheyne's alternative vision for English literature receives belated fulfillment through another Methodist, the century's most prolific publisher. Readers—most of whom would remain outside that "city of dreaming spires"—were presented with an unparalleled array of reading material through the fifty volumes of John Wesley's *Christian Library* (1749-55), which range through history, epistles, sermons, philosophy, and autobiography; those perusing a later periodical (1778-1797) could start with a life of Arminius, serial accounts of the Synod of Dort, and excerpts of natural philosophy before jumping to private letters, autobiographies, and works of poetry—many of which they would have written themselves. A labor-intensive cure for the sensorium that calls for readers and produces writers: this is the experience of the novel worth recreating.

Chapter Three

¹ Karl M. Figlio, “Theories of Perception and the Physiology of Mind in the Late Eighteenth Century,” 179.

² Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science*; see also Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*. Early modern usages of “science” and the “sciences” referred to a range of collective pursuits; the individual designation of “scientist” emerges only belatedly in the nineteenth century. For a helpful discussion, see the preface in Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution*.

³ Quoted in G. S. Rousseau, *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility*, 12.

⁴ Thomas Willis, *Five Treatises.[including] The Anatomy of the Brain*, 51.

⁵ Willis, *Two Discourses Concerning the Soul of Brutes*, trans. Samuel Pordage, epistle dedicatory.

⁶ Willis, *Five Treatises*, c2; *Cerebri Anatome*, 157; trans. A. Meyer and R. Hierons, “A Note on Thomas Willis’ Views on the Corpus Striatum and the Internal Capsule,” 551.

⁷ Quoted in the illuminating essay by John Henry from which this account derives, “Medicine and Pneumatology: Henry More, Richard Baxter, and Francis Glisson’s *Treatise on the Energetic Substance of Nature*,” 36.

⁸ Quoted in Henry, “Medicine and Pneumatology,” 36.

⁹ Quoted in Henry, “Medicine and Pneumatology,” 38-39.

¹⁰ Isaac Newton, *Opticks* (1718, 2nd English edition), 345. The queries were added across later editions of the *Opticks*, first in Latin (1706) and then English (1718).

¹¹ Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), 2:182.

¹² Addison, *Works*, 4:75-77. One is reminded of, for instance, the cosmic sweep of Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts*.

¹³ J. T. Desaguliers, *The Newtonian System of the World, The Best Model of Government: An Allegorical Poem*, line 123. For this line of argument, see Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs and Margaret C. Jacob, *Newton and the Culture of Newtonianism*.

¹⁴ Quoted in Figlio, “Theories of Perception,” 182.

¹⁵ Quoted in Nima Bassiri, “The Brain and the Unconscious Soul in Eighteenth-Century Nervous Physiology: Robert Whytt’s “Sensorium Commune,” 430.

¹⁶ Hisao Ishizuka, *Fiber, Medicine, and Culture in the British Enlightenment*; Willis, *Works*, 164.

¹⁷ Quoted in David C. Hensley, “Richardson, Rousseau, Kant: ‘Mystics of Taste and Sentiment’ and the Critical Philosophy,” 186; Albrecht von Haller, “The Origins of Evil.” In *Poems*, trans. J. Howorth, 86.

¹⁸ Haller, “The Origins of Evil.” In *Poems*, trans. J. Howorth, 98.

¹⁹ Haller, “An Epistle on Reason, Superstition, and Incredulity.” In *Poems*, trans. J. Howorth, 48.

²⁰ Haller, “The Origins of Evil.” In *Poems*, trans. J. Howorth, 98-99.

²¹ Alison E. Martin, “Natural Effusions: Mrs J. Howorth’s English Translation of Albrecht von Haller’s *Die Alpen*,” 28.

²² Haller, “*Ueber den Ursprung des Uebels*.” In *Versuch von Schweizerischen Gedichten*, 12.

²³ James Harrington, *Oceana* (1656), 70.

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- ²⁴ Patricia Parker, “Virile Style”; Harrington, *Oceana* (1700), 459, 178.
- ²⁵ Quoted in Eliga H. Gould’s entry for Pownall in the *ODNB*.
- ²⁶ *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed E. S. De Beer, 4:197, 387. Hereafter cited in-text as *CJL*.
- ²⁷ Quoted in J. E. McGuire and Martin Tamny, *Certain Philosophical Questions: Newton’s Trinity Notebook*, 231.
- ²⁸ Quoted in McGuire and Tamny, *Newton’s Trinity Notebook*, 482.
- ²⁹ Nehemiah Grew, *The Anatomy of Plants*, epistle dedicatory.
- ³⁰ William Briggs, “A Continuation of a Discourse about Vision,” 175.
- ³¹ George Cheyne, *The English Malady*, 100. Cited parenthetically as *EM*.
- ³² Grew, *Anatomy of Plants*, 121.
- ³³ John Calvin, *A Commentarie upon... Genesis*, trans. Thomas Tymme (1578), 118; Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, trans. John King (1847), Gen. 3:21.
- ³⁴ Grew, *The Anatomy of Plants*, epistle dedicatory.
- ³⁵ Swift, Jonathan. *Travels...by Lemuel Gulliver*, 116.
- ³⁶ Gideon Harvey, *The Conclave of Physicians* (1686), 23, 25.
- ³⁷ Harvey, *Conclave of Physicians*, 50.
- ³⁸ Quoted in David E. Wolfe, “Sydenham and Locke on the Limits of Anatomy,” 213.
- ³⁹ Quoted in Kenneth Dewhurst, *Dr. Thomas Sydenham*, 72; see *ODNB* entry.
- ⁴⁰ Sydenham, *Collections of Acute Diseases, the Fourth Part*, trans. John Pechey, 16.
- ⁴¹ Quoted in Heather Meek, “Medical Men, Women of Letters, and Treatments for Eighteenth-Century Hysteria,” 7.
- ⁴² In keeping with Newton’s views, apparently; see Guerrini, 43.
- ⁴³ Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life*, 33.
- ⁴⁴ Quoted in Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, 33-34.
- ⁴⁵ *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson with George Cheyne*, 37. Cited in-text as *CSR*.
- ⁴⁶ George Whitefield, *A Short Account of God’s Dealings* (1740), 14, 16.
- ⁴⁷ See John A. Dussinger’s careful reconstruction of this episode in “*The Oxford Methodists* (1733; 1738): The Purloined Letter of John Wesley at Samuel Richardson’s Press.”
- ⁴⁸ See Marquis Berrey’s entry in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Rehomeing advice from Cheyne and Sydenham into his immensely popular *Primitive Physic* (1747), John Wesley would effectively send the Methodists’ medical vision across the nation in the course of the century. In the reference volume he hoped would be second only to the Bible in practical value, Wesley articulated a hope for primitive renewal—one that would prepare “every Man...[to] prescribe either to himself or his Neighbour” (xiii).
- ⁴⁹ My knowledge of this project owes significantly to David E. Shuttleton, “‘Pamela’s Library’: Samuel Richardson and Dr. Cheyne’s ‘Universal Cure.’”

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